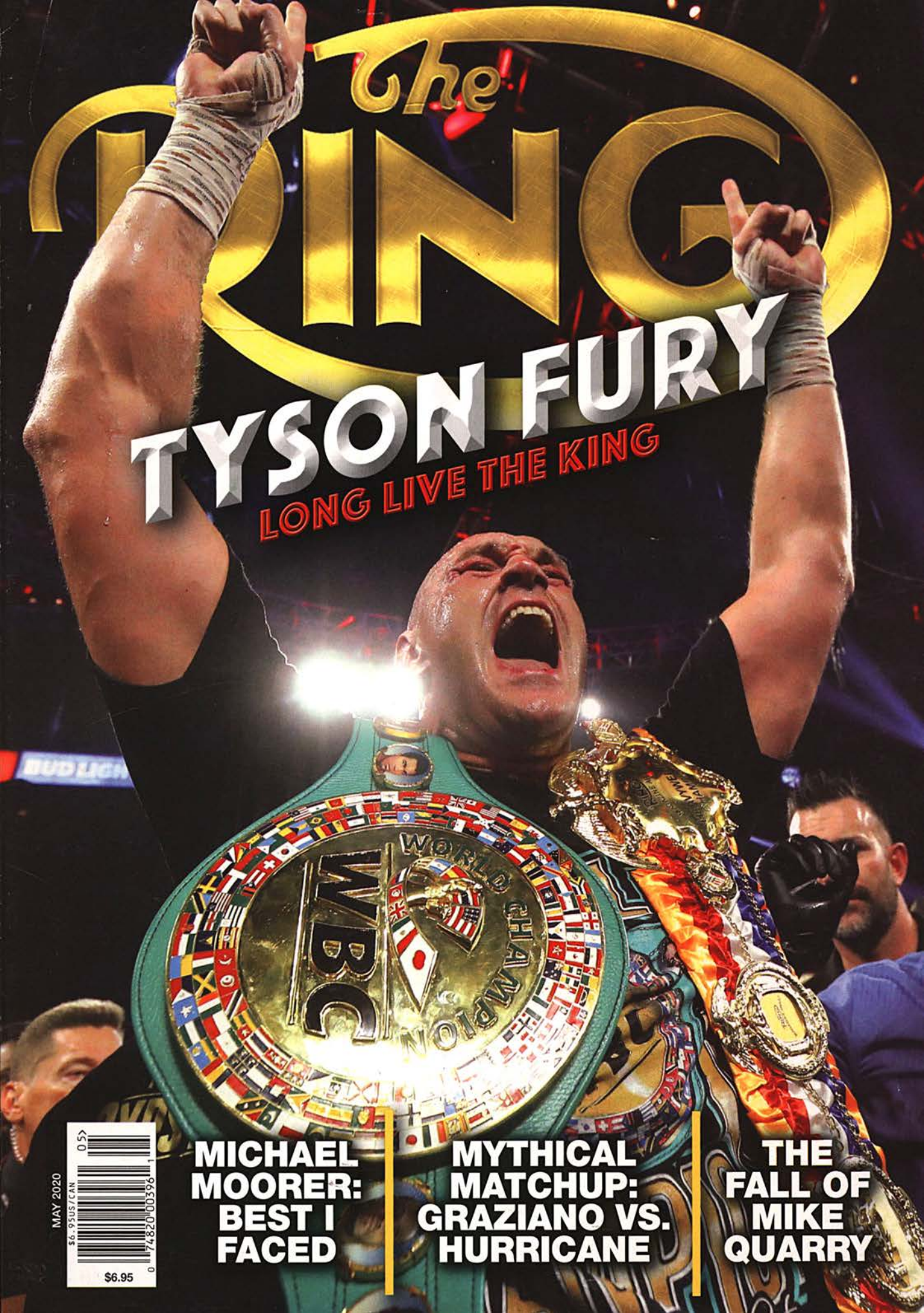
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Tyson Fury wasn't joking about taking it to Deontay Wilder.

COVER PHOTO BY MIKEY WILLIAMS FOR TOP RANK

The IBF heavyweight title elimination bout between Charles Martin (left) and Gerald Washington was as forgettable as prizefights get, in part because it served as the co-feature to Tyson Fury's shocking seventh-round stoppage of Deontay Wilder, but also because it was pedestrian and uneventful until Martin put Washington away with a single left hand in Round 6.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

BRAVO, TYSON

Wow, what a performance by Tyson Fury. I don't think many fans or pundits saw that coming. This must go down as one of the greatest comebacks in all of sporting (not just boxing) history. Nearly all of the pre-fight predictions said the same thing – Fury on points or a Wilder KO, basically following the same pattern as the first encounter. But credit where it's due – Tyson told everyone what his game plan was and most of us didn't believe it. We thought it was just gamesmanship and posturing from the Gypsy King.

I have always thought that Wilder is VERY limited – virtually no footwork, a pawing jab and a limited range of punches. BUT, and it's a big but, he has the hardest right hand possibly in heavyweight history. Fury knew this but, after tasting the Bronze Bomber's power in the first fight, knew he could counter this by forcing him back and neutralizing it. He used his 40-pound weight advantage to great effect, bullying Wilder into submission.

I really don't see the need for a rematch. Other than two of the judges, almost everyone thought Fury won the first fight. The second win was so dominant, I don't think there's much of an appetite for another clash.

Let's hope boxing politics can be put to one side and Fury vs. Joshua can be made for ALL the belts.

Phil
Hull, England

HOW WILL WILDER REBOUND?

It is going to be interesting to see how Deontay Wilder responds to the beatdown he suffered from Tyson Fury. Is he going to respond like Tommy Hearns, as though nothing ever happened and continue to be aggressive, or is he going to become more like Lennox Lewis and Anthony Joshua and become more tentative and fight with less confidence?

I'm still in a state of shock from the massacre. Never ever in my wildest dreams did I think Fury could beat Wilder like that. It was like watching Tyson Foreman instead of Tyson Fury. He reminded me of Big George with this beatdown of Wilder. The sport of boxing has been shocking the hell out of me lately, and I love it. First Ruiz-Joshua and now this fight. The heavyweights are definitely back, and there are a bunch of potential fights that are must-see TV.

Wilder needs to stop with the excuses. It is beneath him and embarrassing. He should thank Mark Breland every day for the rest of his life for saving his life.

Peter
Philadelphia, Penn.

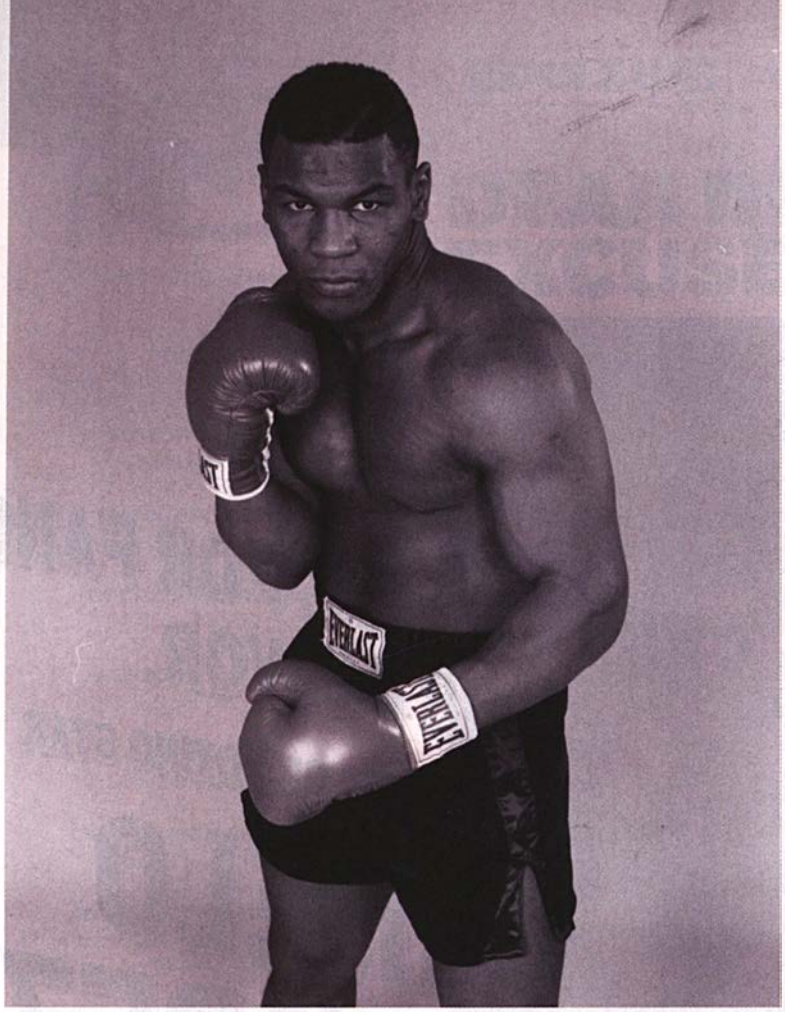
NEW HEAVYWEIGHT ERA

Yes, we have a new heavyweight king, who would easily beat Anthony Joshua, in my opinion. I thought I would be as upset by Wilder's loss as I was when Gerry Cooney lost, but that didn't happen. You can't ignore or discount Fury's ability to evade punches and still land his own shots, all with a smile. I hope Wilder does not go for a rematch, even though his contract permits that outcome. I would rather see the start of a new unified champion – who is also quite young, I might add.

Has any heavyweight since Ali moved as fast and gracefully out of the way of punches? Clearly the answer is no. I only wonder whether Fury's demons will return and send him back to self-abuse, mental illness and self-destruction, since that is what happened to him when he beat the last unified champion, Wladimir Klitschko, about five years ago. Success may be too much for Fury to swallow, especially since he was named after Mike Tyson and lived up to the moniker. Is this really what Tyson Fury wanted, or what his father wanted?

Robert
Forest Hills, N.Y.

Boxing fans were shocked and awed by Tyson Fury's rematch performance against Deontay Wilder.



How would anyone know if Deontay Wilder has a harder right hand than Mike Tyson?

LIVING IN THE PRESENT

Max Kellerman keeps saying that Deontay Wilder's right hand is the hardest punch in boxing history like it's a scientific fact. History? How the f--k can he possibly know that? There's no way to ever find out if Wilder's right hand is a harder punch than Mike Tyson's, George Foreman's, Rocky Marciano's or anyone else's. You can't base it on knockout percentage, because they didn't fight the same people. Maybe Tyson Fury wouldn't have gotten up if that was Foreman who dropped him in the 12th. We'll never know. Can't we just say Wilder has a great right hand? Why does it have to be the hardest in history? Too many people talk about ALL TIME when they only know the present time.

Victor Rivero
Pacifica, Calif.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE GREATNESS

A definition of boxing is "the art of hitting without getting hit." No fighter personified that more than Floyd Mayweather Jr., whose punch stat disparity – punches landed (46 percent) to punches landed on him (22 percent) – is so far apart that no other fighter comes close. People who say Mayweather ran don't understand boxing. And finally Mayweather's defensive wizardry is getting its due, as Fighter of the Decade. Mayweather's 50-0 also includes at least six probable future Hall of Fame names, including Canelo Alvarez, against whom there was no rehydration clause. Alvarez has been known to rehydrate to 170, and it didn't make a difference. Think about that. In 1996, in the wake of the Atlanta Olympics, where David Reid was the sole American gold medalist, a boxing trainer friend of mine said, "Forget about Reid, the one to watch is the kid who won the bronze medal at featherweight."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Floyd Mayweather Jr.," he replied. "He's going to be huge."

Bradley Morris
Astoria, New York

OK, BUT ...

Although I don't want to diminish Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s accomplished career, I believe that his undefeated record would not have remained intact had he fought when the Fab 4 (Leonard, Hearns, Hagler and Duran) ruled boxing in the '80s. Although each of the Fab 4 would've presented a difficult challenge, the fighter that I believe would've presented the most difficulty for Floyd is Tommy Hearns, who was a freak of nature at welterweight. Hearns' height, reach, speed and power would've been a stylistic nightmare for Floyd. Hearns not only had dynamite in his right hand, but also a crippling left hook to the body, which he used to soften up his opponent. He also showed an ability to outbox premier boxers like Leonard and defensive wizard Wilfred Benitez, whom he outboxed with just his jab. The fact that Mayweather wasn't a big puncher would've given Tommy the confidence to apply even more pressure than usual. Mayweather-Hearns would've pitted a great defensive fighter against a great offensive fighter. It would've been a blockbuster event that the public would've clamored for. Had this dream fight occurred, I believe Hearns would have won by late-round stoppage or unanimous decision.

Daniel McKrell
Parma, Ohio

Correction: On page 73 of the April 2020 issue, the photo caption mistakenly identified Kosei Tanaka as Kazuto Ioka.

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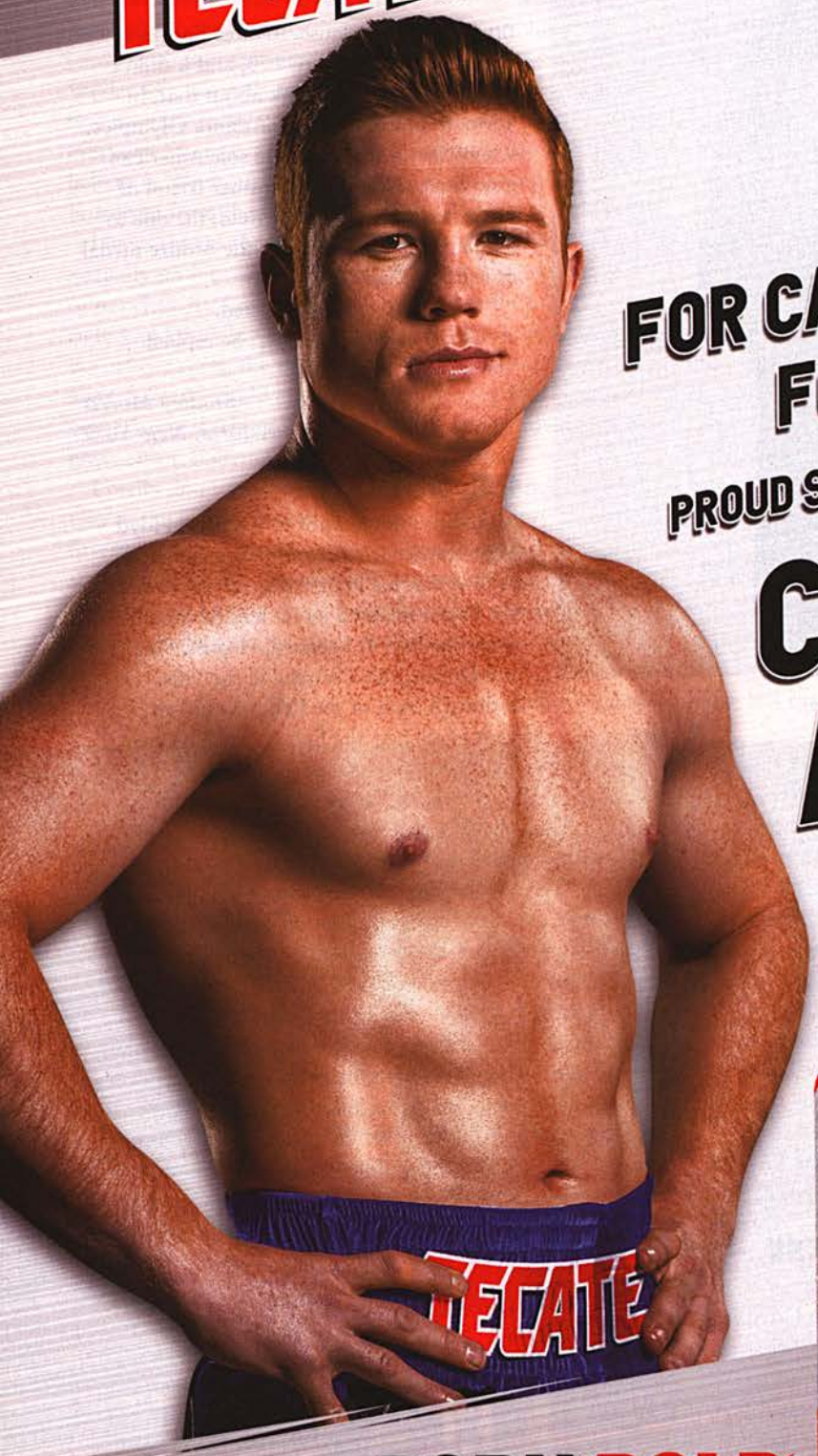

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THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 99, NO. 5 (MAY 2020), is published 12 times per year by Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC, P.O. Box 90254 Brooklyn, NY 11209. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11209 and additional post offices. Postmasters: Send change of address notices to: THE RING, P.O. Box 433122, Palm Coast, FL 32164-3122. Single copy price $6.95 in U.S.A. and Canada (£5.99 in the U.K.). Subscription price U.S. and possession $39.99 for 12 issues including Canada. Mexico add $5. All remaining countries add $10 for 12 issues per year. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2020 Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: advertising@sepublications.com. U.S. / Canadian and International distribution by Comag Marketing Group LLC, 155 Village Blvd #200, Princeton, NJ 08540. UK distribution by Seymour Distribution Ltd., 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, England, EC1A 9PT. Printed In U.S.A.

DEAR DEONTAY, EXCUSES ARE OK

Can't handle heavy cosplay before a fight? Save it for Comic-Con.

By the time this magazine sees print, Deontay Wilder's excuse for not putting up any fight en route to being stopped by Tyson Fury – claiming that the 45-pound costume he wore into the ring weakened his legs – will have been ridiculed and "memed" to death by media and fans.

In fact, it will be old news. Come to think of it, all excuses are old news. They're part of boxing. Contrary to what your average Twitter Head asserts, making an excuse isn't a surefire sign of mental weakness or defective character in a fighter. It's what happens when a proud warrior can't make sense of losing a fight that he was sure he would win.

Long before Mike Tyson boasted of being the "Baddest Man on the Planet," heavyweight champs viewed themselves as invincible and the holders of what was once considered "the biggest prize in sports. " They didn't take losses or the loss of that status lightly.

Jess Willard, who had a 58-pound weight advantage when he defended the crown vs. Jack Dempsey way back in 1919, went to his grave believing the brutal third-round stoppage he suffered against The Manassa Mauler was the result of loaded gloves.

Eight years later, Dempsey believed – along with much of the country – that a "long count" issued after he dropped Gene Tunney in Round 7 of their rematch robbed him of a KO victory and prevented him from regaining the championship against his nemesis.

George Foreman blamed his eighth-round stoppage loss to Muhammad Ali on poisoned water his trainer gave him just before "The Rumble In The Jungle."

Hey, at least Wilder's excuse was creative.

I think it's right up there with

Wladimir Klitschko's claim that his shocking TKO loss to Lamon Brewster in 2004 was due in part to his cutman rubbing too much Vaseline on his legs, thus clogging his pores and causing his entire body to "overheat," or David Haye's broken pinky toe excuse for getting soundly outpointed by Wladdy seven years later.

I won't waste any more words poking fun at the heavy costume excuse, but I will direct the rest of the column to Wilder:

Dear Deontay,

You didn't take the high road following your first pro loss like your boy Anthony Joshua did after being upset by Andy Ruiz last June, but that's OK.

You didn't get seriously hurt (thanks to the timely intervention of Mark Breland, who you'd be a fool to fire), and that's all that matters.

Word is, you will enact the immediate return bout clause in the contract, so you and Fury will likely meet for a third time in the summer.

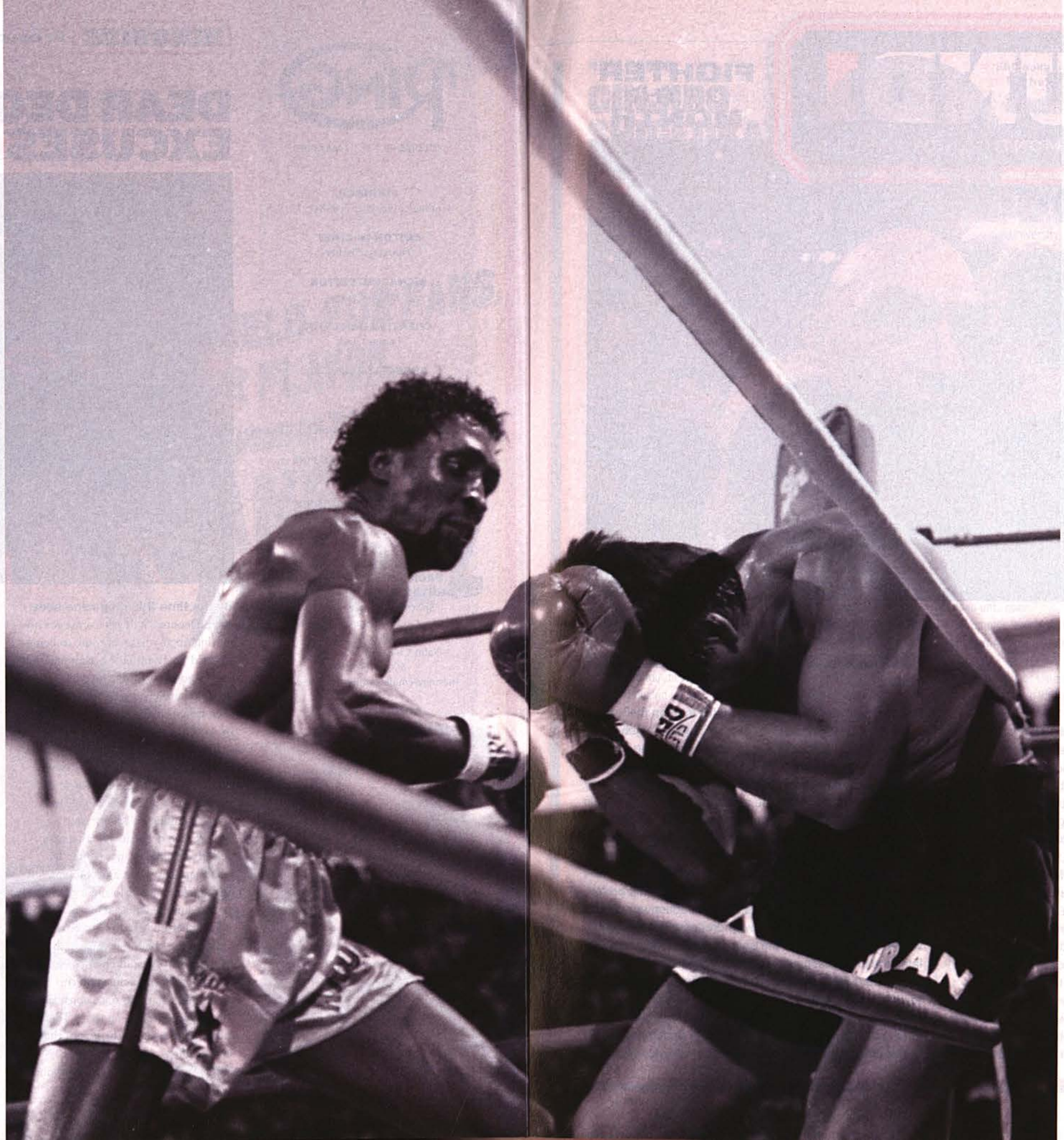
Here's hoping you rebound as well as iconic punchers Thomas Hearns and Julian Jackson did after they suffered their first KO loss. Hearns iced the great Roberto Duran in two rounds after being stopped by Sugar Ray Leonard. Jackson did the same to future Hall of Famer Terry Norris after getting blasted by Mike McCallum.

They regained their "one-hitter-quitter" form, and hopefully, you will too.

But the Hitman and the Hawk were single-minded athletes. They kept a steely focus when training and during fight week, and they did not allow themselves to be pulled in several directions or manipulated by their opponents.

So keep your eyes on that prize and take a little advice from the Editor-In-Chief:

Wear earplugs at the final press conference for the third bout with Fury. The Gypsy King is a natural talker and it looked like he got under your skin at the final presser in Las Vegas. You're a passionate competitor, and there's nothing wrong with that,



Hearns remained a KO artist after being stopped by Leonard.

but a boxer must keep his emotions under control.

Get off social media at least two weeks out from the fight and don't overdo it with the interviews. All it does is drain your energy at a time when you should be getting your most rest.

Maybe leave the cosplay for Comic-Con, and don't make the fight about race unless it really is. I get it, the rematch with Fury took place during Black History Month and you wanted to recognize that and honor African-American achievement and perseverance with your choice of walk-in attire and music accompaniment (rapper D Smoke, who performed his song "Black Habits"). I commend you for that and I'm impressed by D Smoke (a teacher who hails from Inglewood, California). However, if paying tribute to your forefathers by wearing an elaborate, heavy costume puts an unnecessary weight – physically and emotionally – on your shoulders (or legs), maybe it's better to drop the symbolism and focus on being a prizefighter.

That last piece of advice isn't meant to chastise you for expressing yourself. There's nothing wrong with being a proud black man, but just understand that Fury was solely focused on being champ again in February, and he'll be just as focused on keeping his crown the next time you meet.

He doesn't view you as his "black rival," only as a worthy competitor.

You aren't Jack Johnson, he isn't James J. Jeffries, and the boxing world isn't clamoring for a Great White Hope. You're the Bronze Bomber, not the Brown Bomber, and though Fury is from across The Pond, he ain't Max Schmeling. You get my point.

It's OK to be Deontay Wilder. It's also OK (no pressure) to admit that you lost to the better man on February 22 (take your time). You'll get a shot at evening the score with bout No. 3.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

TYSON FURY

Fury is hugged by brother Shane after regaining the Ring Magazine heavyweight championship.

"On February 22, I will smash Deontay Wilder into submission. I'm going to knock him out." That's what Tyson Fury told The Ring five weeks prior to his heavyweight title rematch with the unbeaten American power-puncher. Many boxing insiders balked at Fury's prediction. The colossal Englishman hadn't stopped a distinguished opponent since scoring a 10th-round stoppage over Derek Chisora in their 2014 rematch. No way could Fury outpunch the most fearsome of punchers when they met up at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on February 22. The critics should have known better. Fury, who once forecast that he would school the legendary Wladimir Klitschko in November 2015 and did just that, smashed Wilder all over the ring, dropping the previously unbeaten titleholder twice en route to a shuddering seventh-round stoppage. It was a "wow" moment, a career-defining, virtuoso performance that will be remembered for as long as heavyweight boxing exists. From the opening bell, Fury established his dominance, shocking Wilder and the 18,000 fans in attendance by claiming center ring and putting his man on the defensive. As it had been in the first fight, Fury's jab was effective, but this time there was a damaging right-hand follow up, a lung-bursting body attack and enough inside mauling to wear Wilder to a frazzle. The defending titleholder was cut inside the mouth and bleeding profusely from his left ear, but as the action unfolded, the expression on his face was even more telling. After being dropped by a thumping right in Round 3, Wilder looked like he'd rather be anywhere else in the world. He was never going to give up – his championship pride wouldn't allow it – but he wore a look of acceptance. Fury had everything his own way, dropping Wilder again with a pulverizing left to the body in the fifth. Two rounds later, the most distinguished member of Team Wilder, trainer Mark Breland, had seen enough and threw in the towel. Fury regained the Ring Magazine heavyweight championship and lifted the WBC title, emphatically re-writing the disputed draw with Wilder in December 2018. It was an absolutely astonishing triumph.

NEW FACES

GINJIRO SHIGEOKA

By **Anson Wainwright**

Shigeoka has big plans for such a small fighter, but he's got the talent to achieve his goals.

NAOKI FUKUDA

Fledgling strawweight

Ginjiro Shigeoka impressively stopped former world title challenger Rey Loreto in five rounds in late December. It was a marked step up in competition for the prospect, one that will hold him in good stead as he moves forward with his career.

The 20-year-old turned professional in September 2018 with a routine stoppage. Last year, Shigeoka (5-0, 4 knockouts) won all four bouts against progressively tougher opponents, quickly advancing from the six-round to 12-round level.

The aggressive southpaw could well be one of the best prospects in Asia at the moment. Writer Joe Koizumi, the doyen of Japanese boxing, sees great potential.

"Ginjiro is a vastly talented prospect," the 2008 International Boxing Hall of Fame entrant told The Ring. "He has fast hands and feet, plus is hard-punching. But he needs better experience and more pro bouts prior to his world title shot, since he has to learn how to overcome his physical handicap – he is just 5 feet tall, very short even as a 105-pounder – with his speed, skills and power.

"He scored a fine KO victory over world-rated Rey Loreto, and he needs to score another valuable win over a name world-rated opponent (to get a world title fight)."

Shigeoka was born in Kumamoto in the south of Japan before moving to Tokyo in April 2018. He is the third of four children, and his parents still live in Kumamoto, where they own a painting business.

"I started karate when I was in kindergarten, although I liked watching boxing on TV," he explained. "I started boxing at Honda Fitness Boxing Gym at 10 and continued karate until 12, when my father recommended that I focus on boxing."

Shigeoka was a top amateur domestically, winning five national titles, including two Inter-High School Championships when he was a student. He fought at pinweight (97-101 pounds) in the unpaid ranks.

He lost just once in his amateur career, but it was a unique situation. The defeat came against his elder brother, Yudai, who is also a promising professional, in the Kumamoto prefecture final. Both brothers, their father and their coach agreed that the bout should not take place, and it was decided that Ginjiro would not fight. As soon as the opening bell rang, his corner threw in the towel. The youngster's final record as an amateur was 56-1.

The tiny terror decided against trying to win a berth on the 2020 Japanese Olympic squad.

"I did not hesitate to turn pro at all," he said. "It was partially because there would be no more light flyweight competition in the Olympics, but I have been professionally oriented from the beginning."

Shigeoka opted to sign with the powerful Watanabe Gym for a couple of reasons.

"They scouted me," he explained. "Also, my brother, Yudai, often visited Watanabe Gym for sparring sessions when he was in Takushoku University and told me the atmosphere was very good."

Shigeoka, rated No. 8 in the WBA's 105-pound rankings and inside the top 15 of both the WBC and WBO, has gained valuable experience sparring a handful of titleholders and top contenders in Japan.

"I used to spar with (Ring junior flyweight champion) Hiroto Kyoguchi," Shigeoka revealed. "I go mainly to Misako Gym to spar. I have sparred with WBC 108-pound titlist Kenshiro Teraji twice, four or five rounds each time."

Shigeoka openly admits, laughing, that Teraji got the better of him ("Kenshiro beat me badly in the sparring sessions") but hasn't let it affect his confidence.

"I have big advantages in speed, power, technique and accuracy, along with my good sense of landing punches," Shigeoka said of his arsenal. "My biggest strength lies in my fast stepping to close the gap on an opponent."

His time away from the ring is spent diligently, almost monk-like, working toward his future success. "Roadwork, sleep, gym workout, sleep, repeat," laughed Shigeoka. "I sleep a lot before and after my training. I do not really do anything other than boxing. On Sundays, I go shopping. I live in a gym dormitory and always sleep until noon."

Promoter Hitoshi Watanabe says he just needs to help his fighter gain experience and Shigeoka will be a champion for the long haul.

"From the first time I met him, he already had the intense aura of a fighter," said Watanabe. "His comprehensive boxing ability is already established.

"Before his world title challenge, I want him to build more advanced physical strength and skills, so that he can hold his own in a 12-round fight. He has to be ready for a struggle in which strategy comes into play. We will not hesitate to even go abroad to fight a world title match."

All the while, Shigeoka listened to his boss before piping up: "I am ready to fight a world champion anytime, Mr. Watanabe." And when that time comes, he believes he will make his mark on the sport.

"I would like to break the national record of 13 world title defenses that Yoko Gushiken made," Shigeoka said. "My goal in boxing is to defend a strawweight world title 20 times and retire without losing. Hopefully, I will earn the money necessary to retire (and be happy) for the rest of my life."

Our correspondent Hank Hakoda helped coordinate and translate this feature. The Ring appreciates his assistance. Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

PEDS AND WOMEN'S BOXING

There's a tendency to ignore the issue of illegal performance-enhancing drugs where women boxers are concerned and to focus on the men. The World Boxing Council Clean Boxing Program wasn't expanded to include women until September 2019. And because women fighters generate less revenue than their male counterparts, the women and their promoters are less likely to pay for serious PED testing on their own.

That's unfortunate, because there are danger signs on the horizon.

Heather Hardy was tested by the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association as part of the WBC Clean Boxing Program after the weigh-in for her September 13, 2019, fight against Amanda Serrano at Madison Square Garden. The test came back positive for furosemide (Lasix), which is used as both a masking agent and a weight-loss diuretic. Hardy was fined $10,000 and suspended for six months by the New York State Athletic Commission.

On January 24, 2020, the WBC announced that an "A" sample taken from Alejandra Jimenez by VADA pursuant to the WBC Clean Boxing program on January 10, 2020 (one day before Jimenez's split-decision victory over Franchon Crews-Dezurn in a super middleweight title bout) had tested positive for stanozolol.

Victor Conte has an encyclopedic knowledge of performance-enhancing drugs and has worked with numerous boxers at his SNAC training facility

Heather Hardy's positive VADA test after her decision loss to featherweight titleholder Amanda Serrano (right) indicates that PEDs are a problem in women's boxing.

in northern California.

"There's not a lot of hard data available on PEDs and women's boxing," Conte acknowledges. "But I believe that not only do PEDs increase things like speed, endurance and the damage caused by punches for women boxers, they have a much greater effect on the performance of women boxers than they do for men."

"I'll give you an example," Conte continues. "The baseline level of circulating testosterone in a female is only 10 percent of what it is for a male. And what we found in the past was that if a male and female sprinter were given similar dosages, it had the effect of shortening a 100-meter race for the man by two meters, so his time might drop from, say, 10.2 to 10 seconds. But for a woman on a similar dosage, the gains were proportionally greater. It had the effect of shortening a 100-meter race by four meters, so her time might drop from 11.2 to 10.8 seconds. I believe there's a similar correlation when you're looking at speed, endurance and explosive power in boxing."

Summarizing the situation, VADA CEO Dr. Margaret Goodman says ruefully, "The bottom line is that the women are using PEDs now just like the men."

★★★

Nitin Sethi (a neurologist affiliated with Weill Cornell Medicine) is chief medical officer for the New York State Athletic Commission. In that capacity, he has earned the admiration and respect of everyone who knows him and understands combat sports.

In New York, unlike most jurisdictions, a ring doctor is allowed to unilaterally stop a fight. Dr. Sethi has been unfairly criticized during the past year for doing just that on several occasions when a stoppage was clearly warranted. He addressed this issue in a recent editorial for the Journal of Combat Sports Medicine.

"No amount of boxing or MMA is good for the brain," Dr. Sethi wrote. "Not one round, not one punch to the head. Ringside or cageside physicians need to remain objective, completely free of any bias, and make a call to stop a fight based solely on the medical facts in front of them and not the fighter's past fight record, how big the fight is, or how much money is at stake. The minute we do that, we fail to remain objective. Instead, we turn into spectators who are sitting ringside or cage side rather than in the stands. Our judgment and medical decision-making are going to be biased and now we are primed to fail in our only duty, which is to protect the athlete's health. I realize that my threshold of stopping a fight may differ from a fighter's or a fan's or even a referee's threshold of stopping a fight. The doctor's threshold of stopping a fight should be the lowest. When (others) are worried whether their decision is going to cost them the opportunity of working the next big fight, they cannot be entrusted with the job of protecting the fighter's health and safety."

★★★

Once every year or two, a novelty song becomes a hit. And once every few years, a YouTube celebrity feud attracts attention. Thus it was that the November 9, 2019, encounter between KSI and Logan Paul at Staples Center in Los Angeles was the fourth-most-watched fight of 2019 on DAZN. Taking note, DAZN then streamed a January 30, 2020, matchup between Jake Paul (Logan's brother) and AnEsonGib (aka Ali Loui Al-Fakhri) on the undercard of Demetrius Andrade vs. Luke Keeler three days before the Super Bowl in Miami. For the uninitiated, the name "AnEsonGib" means that Al-Fakhri has an EsonGib – a "big nose" spelled backwards.

Little Brother vs. Big Nose was a sophomorically packaged mess. That said, the success of KSI vs. Logan Paul speaks to the intrinsic appeal of boxing. Most likely, even more viewers would have watched two NBA stars or two big-name NFL players box. But KSI vs. Logan Paul and its progeny also show how far boxing has fallen.

Fans of most sports want to see excellence. Very few people would pay money to watch KSI and Logan Paul play tennis or one-on-one basketball against each other. Boxing, on the other hand, is now being presented as a trash sport. And other trash sports do it better than boxing.

If you want feuds and action, check out WWE.

"Oh! WWE is fake," you say. "We want the real thing."

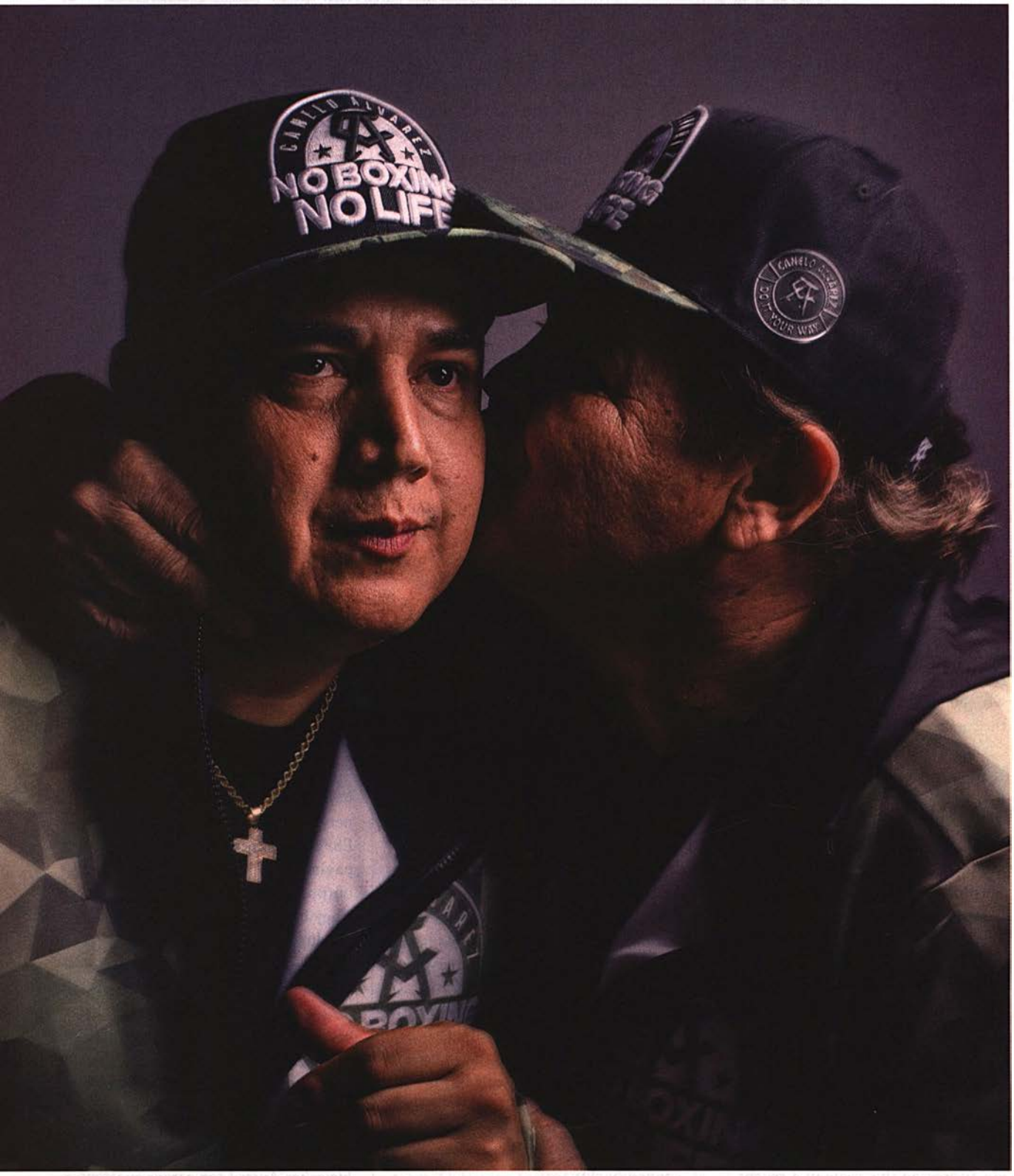
OK. Here's the real thing. More than 1.14 million viewers watched the July 4, 2019, Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest on ESPN. By contrast, the December 14, 2019, ESPN fight card headlined by Terence Crawford averaged 1.35 million viewers. That was the largest average for a Top Rank fight card on ESPN in 2019.

Now imagine what ESPN paid for Terence Crawford's services as opposed to what Joey Chestnut received for winning the 4th of July hot dog eating contest.

In sum, traditional boxing is failing to attract viewers on a basis that's cost-efficient from the networks' point of view. DAZN, ESPN, FOX and Showtime are all paying huge license fees pursuant to output deals with boxing promoters. They have to demand a better product from these promoters.

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – A Dangerous Journey: Another Year Inside Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

THE FACE OF BOXING



EDDY AND CHEPO REYNOSO

CHEPO REYNOSO: THE PATRIARCH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK**
TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

Jose "Chepo" Reynoso has overseen Saul Alvarez's maturation as a fighter since "Canelo" was 13 years old.

"The situation has changed," Chepo told HBO several years ago. "He's a fighter who's grown and we've grown along with him. But to us, he's still the same Canelo."

Chepo is the elder statesman of Team Canelo. His son, Eddy, is now the hands-on trainer, but Chepo monitors every aspect of Alvarez's ring career. He's a calming presence. He doesn't trash talk. One of the few times that he publicly showed anger was when, prior to Canelo-Gennadiy Golovkin II, trainer Abel Sanchez called Canelo "a man without character" and questioned his credentials as a representative of the Mexican people.

"Abel Sanchez just likes to talk," Chepo responded. "He talks too much. At the end of the day, it's going to be Canelo and Triple-G fighting with their fists, not with their mouths. He likes to be the star of the movie, but this is not about him. It's about Canelo and Triple-G. What we need to do as cornermen, as trainers, is to do our job quietly, because it's not about us. Learn to be quiet, please."

The photograph of Chepo and Eddy on the opposite page was taken just before the final pre-fight press conference for Canelo vs. Sergey Kovalev.

"Chepo has a strong personality," photographer Wojtek Urbanek says. "But he's soft in the feelings he has for the people he cares about. What surprised me was that he showed such an open heart in front of the camera. There was no distance between him and the camera."

The photos below were taken two days later, minutes before the weigh-in.

"This is a time when you expect a fighter will be very tense," Urbanek recalls. "But Canelo was remarkably playful and relaxed, like a kid playing with his father. And Chepo loved it. It gave me a look at the warmth and feeling they have for each other. They were both having fun. It was very special that they shared that moment with me." RING

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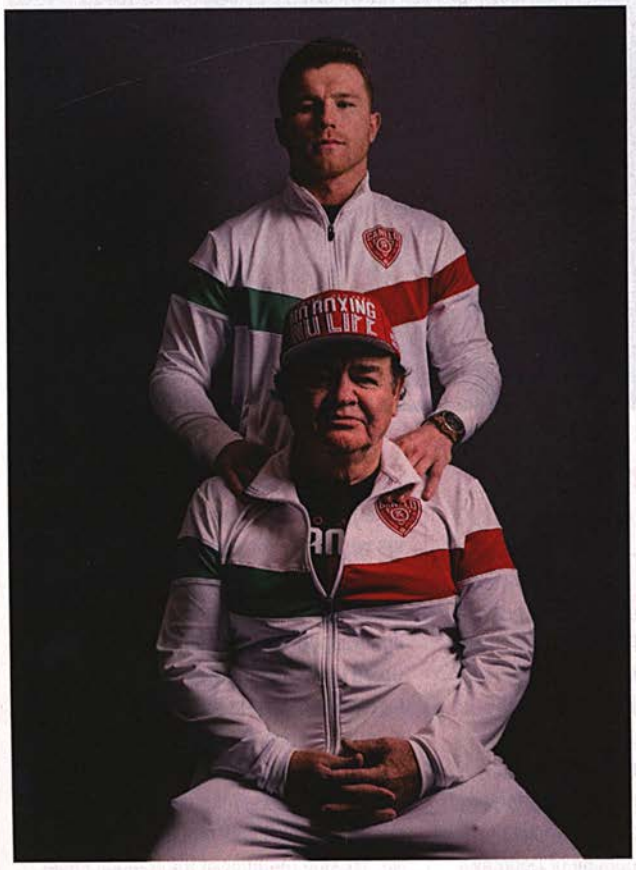


CANELO ALVAREZ AND CHEPO REYNOSO

RATINGS SUMMARY

The Ring Ratings through fights of February 22, 2020

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS

BY BRIAN HARTY

POUND FOR POUND

No changes.

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Nothing to report at heavyweight. (Where's the smiley emoticon button?) Nothing that hasn't been said elsewhere in this issue, anyway. Tyson Fury (No. 1 last month) regained the Ring belt (only the third heavyweight besides Floyd Patterson and Muhammad Ali to do so) with his prediction-smashing stoppage of Deontay Wilder, also picking up the WBC title in a Las Vegas superfight that was thoroughly entertaining from start to finish. The walk-ins were fantastic, the fight had the tension of a time bomb wire-cutting scene (without the predictable outcome) and Fury's post-fight rapport with fans at the sold-out MGM Grand Garden Arena was the sort of spark heavyweight boxing has been craving.

In the ratings, Fury ascended to the "C" spot and Wilder sank to No. 3 underneath Dillian Whyte. Everyone else gained a notch and Oscar Rivas was brought back in at No. 10. One member of the Ratings Panel voted to give Fury the No. 10 spot on the

pound-for-pound list, but the proposal was DOA. While acknowledging the magnitude of the victory, one member summed it up like this: "Heavyweights are just not as talented as other divisions, so it's harder for someone even as talented as Fury to accumulate credit. If Fury beats AJ, then I will reconsider."

"Let's not get too caught up in the moment," said another.

Too late!

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Michal Cieslak (No. 9 last month) got off to a good start against Ilunga Makabu (No. 4), which probably wasn't such a good thing for the Pole, given that he was fighting in Kinshasa, the capital of Makabu's homeland. The bell rang a minute early when Cieslak was doing well in Round 3, and in the next round he was put down by a questionable punch that went unquestioned by the ref. Still, Cieslak notched a knockdown of his own in Round 5, and Makabu then pulled out a legitimate surge of body punches to sway the scorecards in his direction by a slim margin. With the win, Makabu picked up the vacant WBC belt and rose to No. 3 while Cieslak slipped to No. 10.

Kevin Lerena stayed put at No. 5 after a sixth-round stoppage of Firat Arslan (unrated), who is now just months away from his 50th birthday.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Caleb Truax held his position at No. 7 after a tune-up win over journeyman David Basajjamivule, even though the fight took place north of 168 pounds. This was the former IBF titleholder's first outing since a nasty eyebrow cut ended his fight against Peter Quillin in April 2019 in the second round, too early to get a decision either way.

Gilberto Ramirez (No. 2 last month) was removed; his last fight was at 175 and he looks to be staying there. His departure opened up a spot at No. 10 for the return of veteran David Lemieux.

Caleb Plant (No. 2) didn't waste the occasion of his homecoming, making the second defense of his IBF title with a brutal boxing clinic against Vincent Feigenbutz in Nashville. The German challenger came to fight, but Plant's complex and unpredictable combinations – delivered relentlessly and accurately with fast hands – were too much to handle. The referee stepped in at 2:23 of Round 10, much to the delight of the packed house. Focus now shifts to the compelling possibility of a grudge match between two elite-level guys who simply don't like each other, Plant and WBC titleholder David Benavidez (No. 1).

BRETT CARLSEN

Caleb Plant is The Ring's No. 2-rated super middleweight.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Demetrius Andrade (No. 2) supplied some entertainment value to his WBO title defense against Luke Keeler (unrated) by adopting the phrase "Luke, I am your father" in the buildup and then walking to the ring in a Darth Vader mask, but it was a pure mismatch once the bell rang. Keeler went down from a left in the first five seconds, then again from another left in Round 2. The tough Irishman stayed on his feet for the next few rounds, but Andrade was finding no reason not to just swing wildly for the stoppage, so it was only a matter of time – which ran out at the end of the ninth round with the referee stepping in. Frustrated by Canelo Alvarez and Gennadiy Golovkin snubbing him, Andrade said afterward that he's willing to go up in weight to face Billy Joe Saunders next.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Jarrett Hurd remained at No. 4 after he – or at least somebody who resembled him physically – won a unanimous decision over Francisco Santana (unrated) with an uncharacteristically spacious style. Hurd said he was opting to follow his jab this time so he could get "back in the groove" after losing his titles to Julian Williams in May – not much fun for fans wanting to see his usual aggression, but it easily got the job done.

WELTERWEIGHTS

On the same card as Hurd-Santana, Danny

Garcia (No. 6) had his own tune-up after a nine-month layoff, methodically roughing up Ivan Redkach (unrated) for 12 rounds to get a wide unanimous decision. It wasn't all routine for the Philly boxer in Brooklyn, though. During a lull in the beating while locked in a clinch, Redkach bit Garcia's neck; Garcia later claimed that Redkach even said "Mike Tyson" as he did it. The New York State Athletic Commission suspended Redkach's license for a year and fined him 10 grand. But if getting bitten by a neon-haired Ukrainian is what it takes to get a big fight, then Danny Garcia is happy to supply the salt; the former 140-pound champion is now looking at a crash-delayed clash with Errol Spence Jr. or a long-coveted matchup against Manny Pacquiao.

Mike Dallas Jr.'s corner pulled the plug after seven rounds of getting thumped by Yordenis Ugas (No. 7), who looked superior in every category against a faded but respectable opponent. No movement in the ratings.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

No changes.

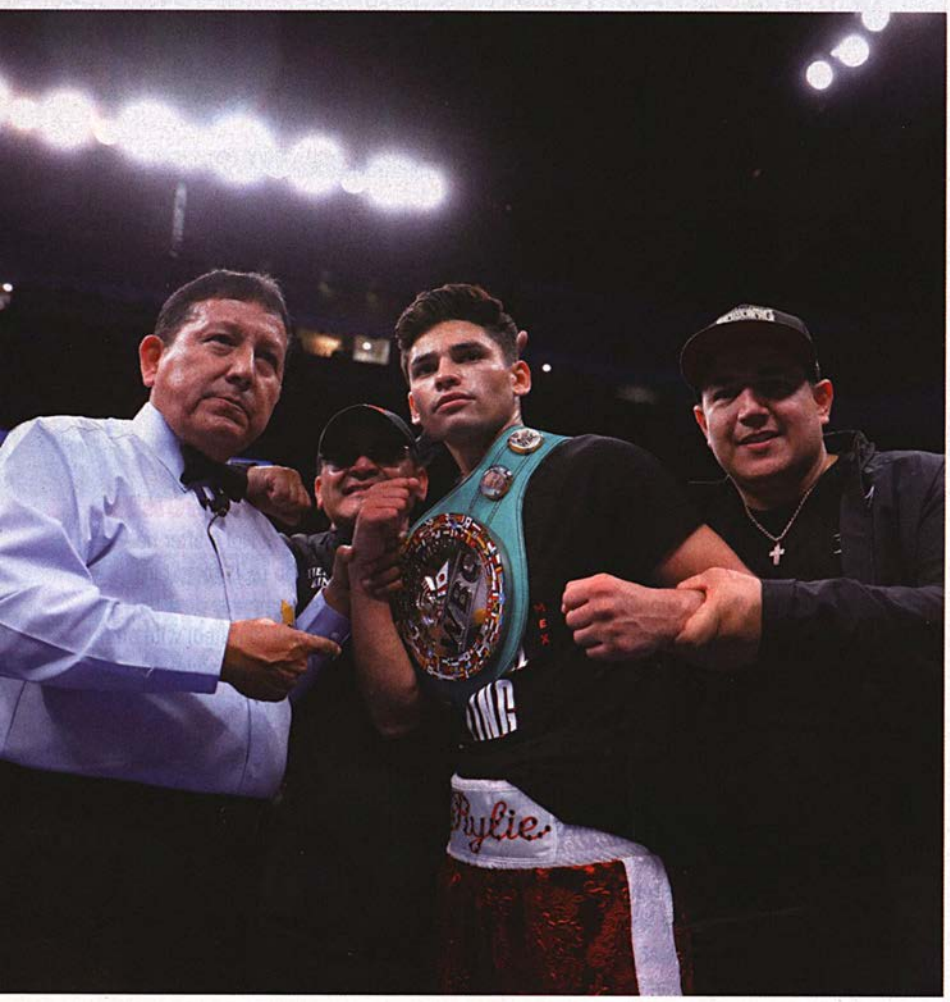
LIGHTWEIGHTS

Even though it was Ryan Garcia's second consecutive fight to take less time than his walk-in, he showed patience in knocking out Francisco Fonseca at 1:20 of the first round. Garcia stunned Fonseca with a left hook, did the same a few seconds later, then timed a vicious third one to leave the Nicaraguan staring up at the lights as referee Raul Caiz Sr. forewent the count and the Valentine's Day crowd went nuts. Yes, the guy is a legit star. Next up – and some say it's a step up too far while others say it's a brilliant piece of matchmaking for the young KingRy (and isn't that the kind of ambiguity we always ask for?) – is former three-division titleholder Jorge Linares, who knocked out Carlos Morales (unrated) in the co-feature. Linares is still searching for himself after losing his lightweight championship to Vasiliy Lomachenko and then biting off too much in a rise to 140, where he was stopped by Pablo Cesar Cano in the first round. It's either brilliance or catastrophe with him. As a result of this win, which featured the obligatory bleeding from Linares' fragile skin and ended with a straight right that sent shivers through Morales' legs and dropped him for the count, the Venezuelan returned to the 135-pound ratings at No. 8, pushing out Yvan Mendy. Garcia rose from No. 6 to No. 5.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Joseph Diaz Jr.'s baby face has been morphing into the hardened visage of a warrior for a while now, but it got a major new battle scar in the fight against IBF titleholder Tevin Farmer on January 30. Resulting from a clash of heads in the second round, a cut over Diaz's left eye blossomed until it looked like a pair of ruby-red wax lips stuck to his face. He somehow ignored the injury and his corner somehow kept his eyelid from sliding off, though (and the officials, with levels of expertise or faith beyond squeamish viewers, decided it was OK to let the fight continue), and that allowed the two speedy southpaws to burrow in for some really nice exchanges.

Diaz was the more effective aggressor, cranking out combinations that traveled up and down the full range between Farmer's head and his belt with sharp uppercuts mixed in, while the Philadelphian's energy seemed to flag as the rounds grinded past. The 2012 Olympian from California got the nod on all three cards to strap on his first world title, something he'd failed to do in 2018, when Gary Russell Jr. handed him his only loss. Farmer has a rematch clause that supposedly must be exercised within six months, but it's not a lot of time for Diaz's face to completely knit after a deep wound like that. Farmer injured his hand in the fight, however, so he might also be grateful for some extra time. In the ratings, the pair swapped places: Diaz from No. 4 to No. 2



Ryan Garcia has advanced to No. 5 in the lightweight rankings after another first-round KO.

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and Farmer from No. 2 to No. 4.

FEATHERWEIGHTS

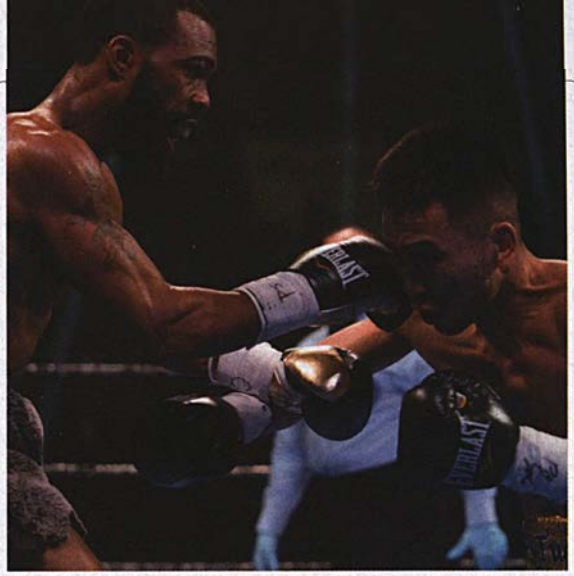
Ruben Villa (No. 10 last month) continued to make his case for a title shot in 2020, remaining undefeated with a dominant unanimous decision win over Alexei Collado (unrated) on ShoBox. Villa rose a notch to No. 9.

Since 2014, Gary Russell Jr. has fought once per calendar year. Usually he waits until May, though, so he might actually be on pace to fight twice in 2020! On February 8, Russell held onto his WBC title with a wide decision over Tugstsogt Nyambayar, outworking the Olympic silver medalist from Mongolia with that mix of wicked speed, skill and karate sounds that reminds us every year that Russell is a very talented guy. He says he's willing to jump divisions for a big fight, so if he doesn't go back into hibernation, first-choice targets include Leo Santa Cruz and Vasiliy Lomachenko (who is responsible for the only loss on Russell's record). As a result of his loss, Nyambayar dropped from No. 6 to No. 8 and Russell held his position at No. 2.

On a Sheffield card that also featured rising force Terri Harper's win over Eva Wahlstrom and Kell Brook's latest victim at junior middleweight, a stance-fluid Kid Galahad (No. 7 last month) broke down unrated Mark DeLuca with a steady supply of accurate jabs and crosses (and holds behind the head). The local man thus rebounded from his loss to Josh Warrington last June and took Nyambayar's old spot at No. 6 in the ratings.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

A bronze medal from Rio in his back pocket but just 8-0 as a pro, Murodjon Akhmadaliev now has a pair of world titles – which is two more than any fighter from Uzbekistan has ever possessed – after winning a split decision over No. 1-rated Daniel Roman in Miami. There was a lot of talent on display from both fighters, with Akhmadaliev's mobility, hand speed and wide power punches blending with Roman's more compact shots that served him well whether he was leading or countering,



Talented but inactive Gary Russell Jr. remains No. 2 in the featherweight rankings.

targeting Akhmadaliev's body or stinging him with uppercuts. Roman threw more punches in the end, but Akhmadaliev landed more of them and was given the win by two judges, 115-113, while the third went with Roman by the same score.

Roman slipped to No. 4 in the ratings with Akhmadaliev entering just above him at No. 3, which made Rey Vargas the new No. 1. The suggestion was made by one ratings panelist to bring Akhmadaliev in at No. 1, but the lack of resume in a tough division kept him out of the top spot for now. Azat Hovhannisyan (No. 10) was pushed off the list and Isaac Dogboe (No. 9 last month) was dropped in favor of Hiroaki Teshigawara, who now sits at No. 10.

In his fifth defense in 15 months, Emanuel Navarrete (No. 3 last month) abused overmatched Filipino Jeo Santisima for 11 rounds; Navarrete was lifted to No. 2 by the Roman-Akhmadaliev shuffle. And Guillermo Rigondeaux (No. 5) continued his inscrutable ways with a drop to bantamweight, so Azat Hovhannisyan moved in at No. 10 to fill the void.

BANTAMWEIGHTS

In his first pro fight at 118, Rigondeaux did Rigondeaux things against tough veteran Liborio Solis (unrated), showing a few flashes of brilliance but generally reluctant to entertain. The two-time Olympic gold medalist won a split decision and entered the ratings at No. 10.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS

Artem Dalakian defended his WBA belt with a unanimous decision over unrated Josber Perez and maintained his position at No. 4. The fight, waged in Dalakian's adopted homeland of Ukraine, was mainly won from the outside with speedy jabs, but the game Perez, who was fighting outside of Venezuela for the first time, tried to take the fight closer, resulting in some messy infighting.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Daniel Valladares (No. 9 last month) fought for the IBF title at strawweight, so he was removed and Argentina's Agustin Gauto came in at No. 10. Thus left to defend the Daniel name on his own, Cuban expat Daniel Matellon (No. 10) moved up a rank and a few days later notched a majority decision over Erik Garcia (unrated) in Panama.

In the Philippines, Sho Kimura (No. 8) rebounded from his loss to Carlos Canizales in May with an above-weight tune-up against unrated Merlito Sabillo, crumbling the local fighter with a single left hook in Round 2. And in Mexico, WBO beltholder Elwin Soto (No. 5) got a first-round knockout in a non-title matchup against Javier Rendon (unrated).

STRAWWEIGHTS

Valladares challenged incumbent titleholder Pedro Taduran (No. 8), but the Mexican's first title shot ended in a four-round technical draw after he suffered a cut. Nevertheless, he entered the list at No. 10, replacing Nkosinathi Joyi.

In Panama, Wilfredo Mendez (No. 3) made his second defense of the WBO title by outboxing Gabriel Mendoza (unrated), capping the victory with a pair of flush straight crosses to trigger the referee's intervention in the ninth round.

RATINGS

The Ring Ratings through fights of Feb. 22, 2020

Rated No. 3 on the pound-for-pound list, Naoya Inoue will defend his bantamweight championship vs. John Riel Casimero on April 25.

VALERY SHARIFULIN/TASS VIA GETTY IMAGES

1 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

2 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

3 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

4 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)

5 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

6 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)

8 **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

9 **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **TYSON FURY** RING, WBC
U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)

1 **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO
U.K. • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)

2 **DILLIAN WHYTE**
U.K. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

3 **DEONTAY WILDER**
U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)

4 **LUIS ORTIZ**
Cuba • 31-2-0 (26 KOs)

5 **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
U.S. • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)

6 **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)

7 **JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 26-2-0 (20 KOs)

8 **MICHAEL HUNTER**
U.S. • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)

9 **ADAM KOWNACKI**
U.S. • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 **OSCAR RIVAS**
Colombia • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
Latvia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

2 **YUNIEL DORTICOS** IBF
Cuba • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)

3 **ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC
Congo • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)

4 **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
Poland • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)

5 **KEVIN LERENA**
S. Africa • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 **ANDREW TABITI**
U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)

7 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

8 **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA
France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

9 **THABISO MCHUNU**
S. Africa • 22-5-0 (13 KOs)

10 **MICHAL CIESLAK**
Poland • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

2 **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
Ukraine • 17-1-0 (14 KOs)

3 **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA
Russia • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

4 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)

5 **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
Colombia • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

6 **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada • 35-6-1 (20 KOs)

7 **BADOU JACK**
Sweden • 22-3-3 (13 KOs)

8 **MARCUS BROWNE**
U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

9 **JOE SMITH JR.**
U.S. • 25-3-0 (20 KOs)

10 **DOMINIC BOESEL**
Germany • 30-1-0 (12 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **CALLUM SMITH** RING, WBA
U.K. • 27-0-0 (19 KOs)

1 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ** WBC
U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

2 **CALEB PLANT** IBF
U.S. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
U.S. • 33-2-1 (24 KOs)

4 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

5 **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** WBO
U.K. • 29-0-0 (14 KOs)

6 **CALEB TRUAX**
U.S. • 31-4-2 (19 KOs)

7 **JOHN RYDER**
U.K. • 28-5-0 (16 KOs)

8 **FEDOR CHUDINOV**
Russia • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)

9 **AVNI YILDIRIM**
Turkey • 21-2-0 (12 KOs)

10 **DAVID LEMIEUX**
Canada • 41-4-0 (34 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of Feb. 22, 2020

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA — Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
- **1** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF — Kaz. • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)
- **2** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO — U.S. • 29-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **JERMALL CHARLO** WBC — U.S. • 30-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** — Ukraine • 13-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOTA MURATA** — Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **KAMIL SZEREMETA** — Poland • 21-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **7** **CHRIS EUBANK JR.** — U.K. • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **8** **MACIEJ SULECKI** — Poland • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **9** **ROB BRANT** — U.S. • 25-2-0 (17 KOs)
- **10** **LIAM WILLIAMS** — U.K. • 22-2-1 (17 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JERMELL CHARLO** WBC — U.S. • 33-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **JEISON ROSARIO** IBF, WBA — Domin. Rep. • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **3** **JULIAN WILLIAMS** — U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **4** **JARRETT HURD** — U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **ERISLANDY LARA** — Cuba • 26-3-3 (15 KOs)
- **6** **BRIAN CASTANO** — Argentina • 16-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **7** **TONY HARRISON** — U.S. • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **MICHEL SORO** — France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **9** **ERICKSON LUBIN** — U.S. • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **PATRICK TEIXEIRA** — Brazil • 31-1-0 (22 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC — U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO — U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MANNY PACQUIAO** WBA — Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4** **KEITH THURMAN** — U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5** **SHAWN PORTER** — U.S. • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6** **DANNY GARCIA** — U.S. • 36-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **YORDENIS UGAS** — Cuba • 25-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV** — Uzbekistan • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **SERGEY LIPINETS** — Russia • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS** — Lithuania • 21-1-1 (17 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA — U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1** **JOSE RAMIREZ** WBC, WBO — U.S. • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **REGIS PROGRAIS** — U.S. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)
- **3** **IVAN BARANCHYK** — Russia • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **VIKTOR POSTOL** — Ukraine • 31-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **KIRYL RELIKH** — Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **6** **MAURICE HOOKER** — U.S. • 27-1-3 (18 KOs)
- **7** **JOSE ZEPEDA** — U.S. • 31-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **8** **MARIO BARRIOS** — U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **ARNOLD BARBOZA** — U.S. • 23-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10** **BATYRZHAN JUKEMBAYEV** — Kazakhstan • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)

Demetrius Andrade (right) held his position in the ratings after dominating an overmatched Luke Keeler.

No. 6-rated welterweight Danny Garcia (left) got bitten, but he didn't get much of a challenge from Ivan Redkach.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** RING, WBA, WBO — Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** IBF — U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **2** **DEVIN HANEY** — U.S. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **RICHARD COMMEY** — Ghana • 29-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **4** **LUKE CAMPBELL** — U.K. • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **RYAN GARCIA** — U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **6** **ROBERT EASTER** — U.S. • 22-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **JAVIER FORTUNA** — Dom. Rep. • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **JORGE LINARES** — Venezuela • 47-5-0 (29 KOs)
- **9** **EMMANUEL TAGOE** — Ghana • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **RANCES BARTHELEMY** — Cuba • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **MIGUEL BERCHELT** WBC — Mexico • 37-1-0 (33 KOs)
- **2** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF — U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **JAMEL HERRING** WBO — U.S. • 21-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **4** **TEVIN FARMER** — U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **5** **RENE ALVARADO** — Nicaragua • 32-8-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **MASAYUKI ITO** — Japan • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **ANDREW CANCIO** — U.S. • 21-5-2 (16 KOs)
- **8** **MIGUEL ROMAN** — Mexico • 62-13-0 (47 KOs)
- **9** **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV** — Russia • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **CHRIS COLBERT** — U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JOSH WARRINGTON** IBF — U.K. • 30-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC — U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **CARL FRAMPTON** — U.K. • 27-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **4** **XU CAN** WBA — China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **5** **SHAKUR STEVENSON** WBO — U.S. • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **6** **KID GALAHAD** — U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **7** **MARK MAGSAYO** — Phil. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **8** **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR** — Mongolia • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **RUBEN VILLA** — U.S. • 18-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **JESSIE MAGDALENO** — U.S. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **REY VARGAS** WBC — Mexico • 34-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **EMANUEL NAVARRETE** WBO — Mexico • 31-1-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA — Uzbekistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **DANIEL ROMAN** — U.S. • 27-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **5** **TJ DOHENY** — Australia • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **6** **RYOSUKE IWASA** — Japan • 27-3-0 (17 KOs)
- **7** **BRANDON FIGUEROA** — U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)
- **8** **TOMOKI KAMEDA** — Japan • 36-3-0 (20 KOs)
- **9** **HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA** — Japan • 21-2-2 (14 KOs)
- **10** **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN** — Armenia • 18-3-0 (15 KOs)

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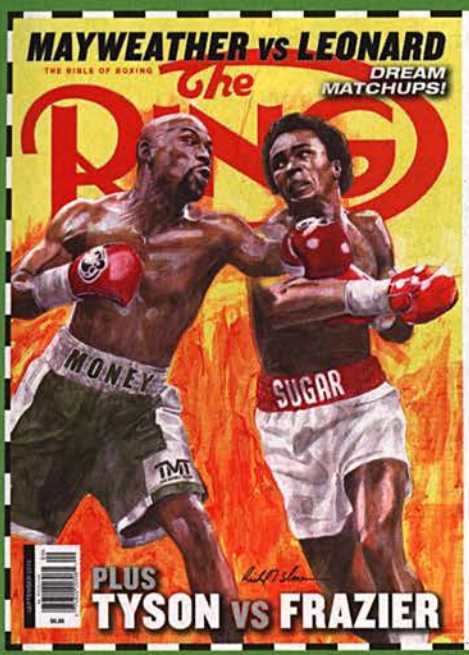

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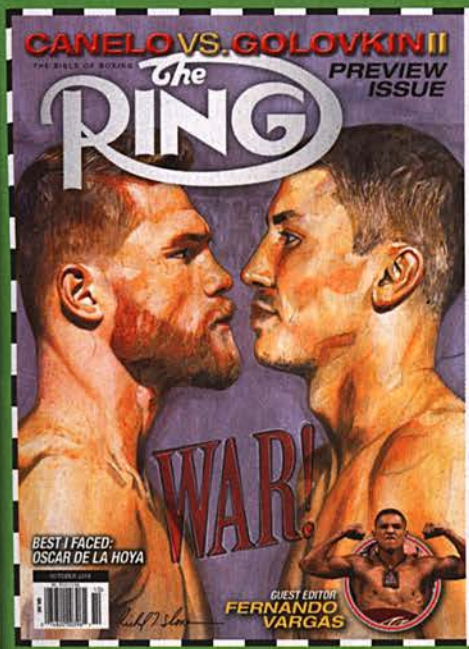

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RATINGS

Through fights of Feb. 22, 2020

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE**
  Phil. • 40-6-0 (26 KOs)
- **2** **NORDINE OUBAALI** WBC
  France • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 29-4–0 (20 KOs)
- **4** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 20-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **7** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)
- **8** **JOSHUA GREER**
  U.S. • 22-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **9** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **10** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBC
  Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 47-5-1 (41 KOs)
- **2** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 25-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **3** **DONNIE NIETES**
  Phil. • 42-1-5 (23 KOs)
- **4** **KHALID YAFAI** WBA
  U.K. • 26-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **5** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 32-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **6** **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
  Nicaragua • 48-2-0 (40 KOs)
- **7** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **8** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 33-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **9** **JEYVIER CINTRON**
  P.R. • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **ALEJANDRO BARRIOS**
  Mexico • 21-2-5 (11 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **MORUTI MTHALANE** IBF
  S. Africa • 39-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **3** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 15-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **CHARLIE EDWARDS**
  U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 13-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **8** **JUNTO NAKATANI**
  Japan • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **9** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 29-5-0 (20 KOs)
- **10** **GIEMEL MAGRAMO**
  Phil. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3** **CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **5** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6** **TETSUYA HISADA**
  Japan • 34-10-2 (20 KOs)
- **7** **EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **8** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL MATELLON**
  Cuba • 11-0-2 (6 KOs)
- **10** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)

Jorge Linares earned a summer showdown against Ryan Garcia with a fourth-round stoppage of Carlos Morales (right).

No. 2-rated junior lightweight Joseph Diaz Jr. won his first world title with a decision over Tevin Farmer (right).

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** WBC
  Thailand • 54-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 20-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 20-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
  S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **PEDRO TADURAN** IBF
  Phil. • 14-2-1 (11 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL VALLADARES**
  Mexico • 22-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **10** **MELVIN JERUSALEM**
  Phil. • 15-2-0 (9 KOs)

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A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

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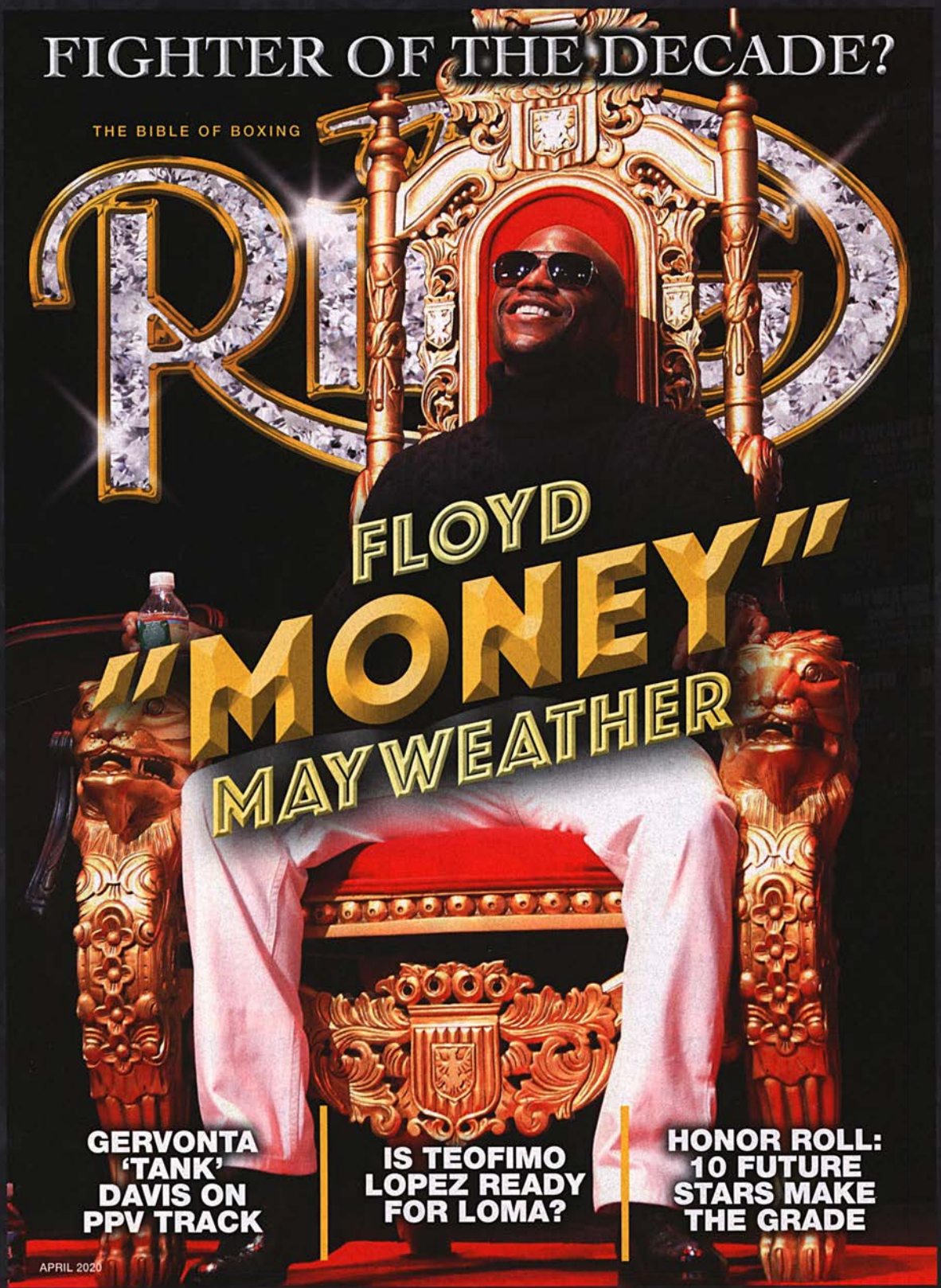

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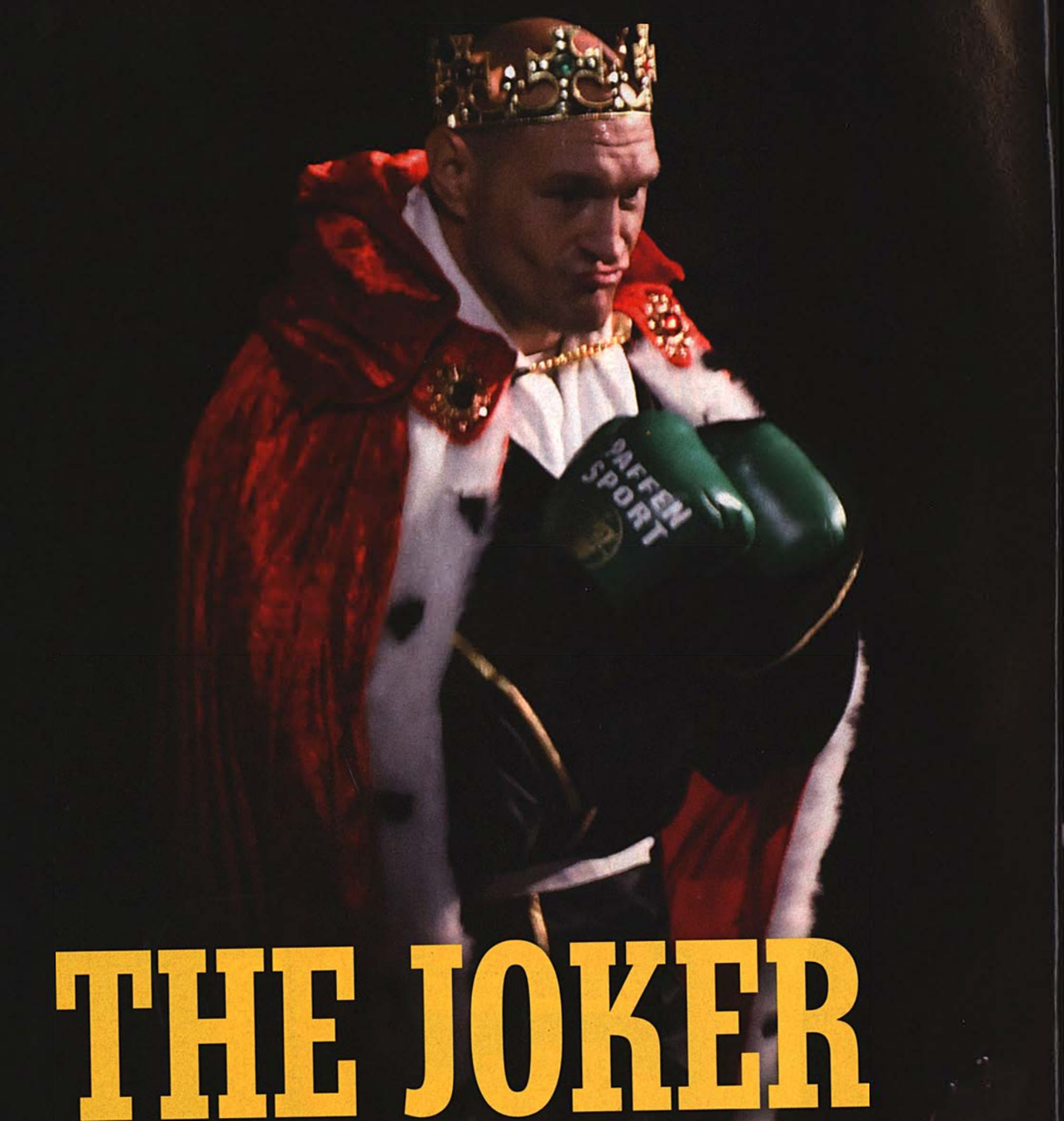


THE JOKER IS THE KING

TYSON FURY'S FLAIR FOR TOMFOOLERY KEPT THE BOXING WORLD AND DEONTAY WILDER GUESSING UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO GET SERIOUS

By **Doug Fischer**

Despite the litany of embarrassing excuses offered up in the days following his first professional loss, it's hard not to feel sorry for Deontay Wilder.

The fearsome heavyweight puncher appeared just as surprised as the rest of us by the focused fight plan Tyson Fury overwhelmed him with on February 22 in Las Vegas, even though the once-again Ring Magazine champion and new WBC beltholder gave Wilder – and the rest of the boxing world – plenty of warning.

Fury told everybody what he planned to do from the moment their anticipated rematch was formally announced. His mantra coming into the unprecedented ESPN-FOX pay-per-view collaboration was that he would eschew his customary herky-jerky stick-and-move style for a more direct approach.

He would bulk up, improve his offense and take the fight to Wilder, who can be forgiven for thinking Fury was talking out of his ass.

Fury does a lot of that, sometimes just for shits and giggles, sometimes to see if his intended audience will buy it and run with it (and in the social media age, everybody does), but he usually does it to get into his opponents' heads. He likes to keep people guessing, delights in manipulating gullible types, and this expertise in misdirection was probably just as much of an asset to him vs. Wilder as his greater height, reach, body mass and boxing IQ.

Fury's got that Ali-esque playfulness that gets under Wilder's skin. Destroyers do not like to be played with, especially by guys who claim to play with themselves seven times a day.

Most of us view Fury's vulgar humor and pre-fight bluster as mere showmanship, a flair for entertainment that is more than welcome in an increasingly corporate boxing landscape, but he's also a brave fighter. Nobody had a better understanding of that than Wilder, who couldn't keep him down in their first bout in December 2018, even when it looked for a few seconds like he'd knocked Fury into a coma in the first minute of Round 12.

Fury didn't just get up and survive the final two minutes of that celebrated round; he fought back and even stunned Wilder a few times. Perhaps he realized then and there that he'd made things harder on himself by being elusive and defensive-minded against the KO artist.

Fury, who had to settle for a split draw against Wilder despite believing he outboxed the WBC titleholder, claimed that scoring a stoppage was the only way he could beat the American on U.S. soil. But even though many observers agreed that Fury received a raw deal in the first fight, most thought his logic was counterintuitive to what got him to the big stage of the rematch.

Others have tried to fight fire with fire vs. Wilder – most notably Luis Ortiz and Artur Szpilka – and while they kept it close on the scorecards and had moments (the Cuban nearly had him out on his feet in Round 7 of their first bout), both got burned in the end.

Of course, Szpilka, a face-first brawler, isn't on Fury's level in terms of skill or size. Ortiz, a legit contender with power and technique, is rather plodding. Fury has the ability to come forward while keeping Wilder at arm's length, unlike Szpilka. And unlike Ortiz, he possesses quick hands and feet to get off first and then hop back out of range whenever Wilder lets his right hand go.

But was he serious about boxing aggressively? Knowing that he might be able to do so effectively but not knowing if he would really try must have wreaked havoc on Wilder's mind in the final days and hours of fight week in Las Vegas.

The combination of being unpredictable and courageous is often kryptonite to menacing, intimidating fighters. Muhammad Ali's antics and weigh-in theatrics unnerved Sonny Liston before the young upstart did a number on the feared heavyweight champ in the ring. Sugar Ray Leonard borrowed some of Ali's taunts and showboating tactics during the infamous "No Mas" rematch with the great Roberto Duran.

However, prior to February 22, it was inconceivable for even Fury's fans to think the big man was capable of a performance so dominant and commanding that it would invoke comparisons to legendary boxers like Ali and Leonard. This is a man who seemingly clowned his way to the heavyweight crown against Wladimir Klitschko in November 2015 and then couldn't handle his own success, falling into a downward spiral that eventually resulted in his world titles, including the Ring belt, being stripped from him.

This is the guy who, just a few

Tyson Fury's flamboyant, regal ring entrance illustrated his penchant for silliness and showmanship, but he was all business – to the surprise of Deontay Wilder and the boxing world – once the bell rang.

months before the rematch, split with trainer Ben Davison, his chief support during his long road to recovery and the strategy architect for the first Wilder fight.

Yes, his new trainer, Javan Hill, aka SugarHill Steward, is the nephew of Emanuel Steward and an acolyte of the kick-ass "Kronk-style" of boxing, but would he be the right fit for the mercurial giant?

That was one of many questions.

Had the gruesome cuts above Fury's right eye, suffered during his struggle with Otto Wallin in September, completely healed?

Was his training camp impeded by ankle injuries incurred during preparation for his late October WWE excursion?

Even when Fury weighed in at 273 pounds, nobody could agree on what it meant. Was he unable to train properly? Was he pulling an "Andy Ruiz?"

Fans who bet on Fury admitted that they would sit on pins and needles for as long as the fight lasted. Those who bet on Wilder were very confident given all the X-factors surrounding Fury.

However, while nobody questioned Wilder's readiness, there were telltale signs that he may have been battling his own doubts in the final days of the star-studded event.

He weighed in at a career-high 231 pounds. Why? Did he think he needed extra muscle because Fury said that he would come in heavy?

Why did he reportedly go through a grueling mitt session late Friday following the weigh-in? Wasn't all the hard work done back in camp in Alabama?

And why was he pacing back and forth in his dressing room hours before the fight. Why so tense?

Was Wilder stressing out, thinking: "What if he does come right at me? Is the man crazy enough to do that?"

Indeed, a crown-wearing Fury entered the ring to Patsy Cline's "Crazy," sitting aloft an elevated throne carried by female gladiators.

Fury knew that aggressive boxing was the best way to neutralize Wilder's vaunted power-punching.

Wilder's dramatic and surreal ring-walk entrance added more bulk to his already over-muscled upper body in the form of an elaborate 45-pound costume. It was a dark, spiky, faceless malevolent-looking robot character straight from the bad dream of a child who watched too many episodes of the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers.

But once Wilder climbed into the ring in that getup, he had to face his own nightmare – a bigger, taller, rangier, smarter boxer who wasn't in awe of his vaunted power. And before the two unbeaten heavyweights were announced to the standing-room crowd inside the MGM Grand Garden Arena, all of that silly cosplay body armor had to come off, piece by piece.

Wilder was laid bare minutes before his biggest fight. If he was going to seize the moment, he would have to rely on all the talent and attributes that got him to this grand stage – fierce pride, quick-twitch athleticism, a solid jab and, of course, a massive right hand.

However, within nine minutes, the world watched Wilder get undressed again. Fury beat him to the jab from the outside and backed him up with fast one-two combinations. He didn't flinch when Wilder fired his right, but Wilder hesitated whenever Fury feinted. Wilder was knocked off-balance by left hooks from mid-range and drained from body shots in close. The fight was essentially over when Wilder suffered a knockdown from a stiff jab-right-hand-to-the-ear combination in Round 3.

Fury took Wilder's jab, right hand and his confidence to react instinctively.

Only Wilder's pride remained. It got him through Round 3, kept him upright in Round 4, got him up off the canvas when Fury put him down with a left to the body in Round 5 and enabled him to absorb a vicious pounding in Round 6. But pride wouldn't prevent Fury from putting the lighter man in a headlock during clinches and leaning his extra 42 pounds on him.

Head trainer Jay Deas couldn't talk Wilder through this. His man was battered and bewildered, eyes puffy, blood dripping from his mouth and ear. Co-trainer Mark Breland had been in Wilder's shoes and knew when to save the helpless warrior from himself.

The white towel Breland tossed into the ring signaled the close of a memorable event and evening, giving Fury a fairytale-like ending to his improbable comeback.

He had the entire arena join him in a rendition of "American Pie" following his in-ring post-fight interview. Co-promoters Bob Arum and Frank Warren had to pat each other on the back, having predicted that Fury would become a star in the U.S. when they joined forces in early 2019.

What's next? A third fight with Wilder in the summer? A showdown for the undisputed championship vs. Anthony Joshua in the fall?

Can Fury hold it together long enough to cash in? Will he handle success better the second time around?

Will he stay with SugarHill? Will he bring in another trainer? Will he change his style again?

We have no idea. That's what makes Fury special.

The Gypsy King will keep us all – especially Wilder and Joshua – guessing. And entertained.

BEYOND A SHADOW

TYSON FURY'S MASTERFUL PERFORMANCE AGAINST DEONTAY WILDER TO REGAIN THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP WAS PROOF OF HIS RESILIENCE AS MUCH AS HIS STATUS IN THE DIVISION

By **Gareth A Davies**

Tyson Fury's long and bumpy road back to the Ring Magazine championship was completed with one of the best heavyweight performances in many years.

So powerful was the impact of Tyson Fury's story as it reached beyond prizefighting to the wider world, the self-styled "Gypsy King" was invited to the White House and the Vatican after his triumphant victory over Deontay Wilder in their second encounter. In 30 years of reporting, for the record, this will remain etched in the memory as one of the most thrilling nights anywhere in the world from London to Las Vegas, from Cardiff, Dusseldorf or New York. Bold in strategy, audacious in delivery, another night like this may be a long time coming.

Remember, this was two undefeated giants in their prime, and the buildup and the execution did not disappoint for one second. Even Wilder, battered around the small-sized ring, refused to quit as he staggered on wobbly legs like a man lost in Sin City. Only the towel saved him, and the Alabamian even complained about that afterward.

The fighter from the Black Warrior River will return again, less costumed next time.

The 31-year-old Fury, though, all 6 feet 9 inches and 270 pounds of him, is now the world's No. 1 heavyweight.

Fury joined his fans at after-parties in Sin City and then returned home to the United Kingdom, where he told your correspondent that

he would "crack open the old caravan and go touring the country with my kids." That is Fury all over. "We'll sit around the fire, close to nature, as there is no better place. Even if I lived in a castle, I'd still rather sleep in a caravan," he said.

That humility, common to his Traveller heritage, has served Fury well through thin and thinner. Well, in Fury's case, from fatter to bruising heavyweight king.

There had been talk of a homecoming parade for Fury, in the seaside town of Morecambe, but promoter Frank Warren – who backed him to beat Wladimir Klitschko in 2015, to beat Wilder 15 months ago (against widespread concern), and again to stop Wilder in Las Vegas – explained to me as he sipped champagne, still elegantly attired high up in the Waldorf Astoria overlooking the post-fight revelry along The Strip: "U.S. President Donald Trump has invited Tyson and Wilder to the White House. Also the World Boxing Council have got an invitation from the Pope, too. It shows you what can happen in the space of two years. The journey he has been on has been an amazing thing. He's turned his whole life round."

Fury – whose life change from obesity, depression and mental health issues to become a two-time world champion, still undefeated – has captured hearts and minds in the last year, and the fighter is now being compared to the greats of the sporting firmament who had an impact on society. Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman. Three others – Lennox Lewis, Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield – were in the ring before the fight, enjoying the spectacle. Fury has become a giant like them. Forget the critique of Wilder's technical frailties; he is a dangerous, dangerous man with gloves on. Fury took it away from him, pushed him onto the back foot with heavy, bruising jabs. He walked down the man who had bullied and bludgeoned his victims and for good measure dropped him with a head shot and a body shot. It was a complete victory. Wilder is no counterpuncher, and you cannot punch hard if you are constantly going backward. Wilder was too heavy, Fury heavier and handier.

Having visited each heavyweight in their respective camps as the weeks ticked down at the start of the decade – Fury at his mansion south of The Strip in Las Vegas and Wilder at a gym bordering the woods in Northport, Alabama – it was difficult to pick the tiniest feather between them. The 34-year-old Wilder cut a compelling, chiseled figure as the rains in Alabama accompanied his final days before the sojourn to Sin City. Regarded as one of the most dangerous punchers in the history of boxing's blue riband division, he exuded a relaxed yet menacing calm. At the gym, having been through training moves and his kinesthetics earlier in the day, Wilder came from home late one evening for an interview, past the Black Warrior River running through Wilder's hometown of Tuscaloosa. Three buckets near the boxing ring caught droplets of rainwater coming through holes in the ceiling. The gym was crammed full of the machinery and bags of the daily grind; the air hung heavy with the perspiration of a dozen boxers, all ages and sizes, who had been trading leather and sweat. Wilder towered above everyone in the gym.

Both heavyweights seemed prepped and poised for victory, but only Fury would back up his words.

The WBC titleholder took his T-shirt off for photographs; his skin looked like honed metal. Health radiated from him; the eyes were bright. This was the fighting Wilder, ready for destruction just days away. But there was a patience about him, a calm. We talked of embracing fistic war, making a pact with oblivion. "I definitely embrace it all," he said. "When it comes to this sport – that I love – I have no fear. I understand what I've been getting myself into. And I sign my name on the dotted line, on the contract, knowing, willing and able. Let the oblivion come. I'm preparing for it. I've overcome adversity many times. Bring it on. That's how my mindset is built. Even in life, fear will hold you back and stop you accomplishing your dreams." It was deep. It was believable.

His final words: "I'm starting where I left off. We know each other now. Two warriors with the mindset that you're going to have to damn near kill us. The key to the second fight is making the appropriate adjustments that I didn't make in the first fight. I did things I don't normally do. I was more wild. I was reckless. I'll be different this time." And so it proved.

Victory, I suggested, would have a wider meaning for Wilder. In the crowded sports and entertainment landscape, the titleholder since 2015 had been underappreciated by the U.S. media, boxing or otherwise, despite being a compelling character with a fascinating narrative and a clear message as a father, citizen and African American.

"It comes with the territory. Being in America, we're diverse. We're not one nation. We're a nation divided into many. But after this fight, I'll get the recognition I so deserve. It may not come when you want it, but when it does come, it's always on time."

Fury, meanwhile, talked and joked about "regulating" himself several times a day and revealed to me (another ruse, of course) that he was dipping his fists in gas throughout the day. He spoke openly of a game plan that would include educated pressure to wear his foe down. At the weigh-in, Wilder finally displayed his body, which is a storybook of tattoos – words and pictures adorning his huge frame. Yet Fury did not read any of it. The Briton made the script his own. On the scales, the story turned. Fury 273 and Wilder 231. Something shifted. The look of them, but particularly Fury. Easy to say with hindsight, yet it was a nuanced feeling at the time, that Wilder was sucked into Fury's plan, that the execution of the plan was faulty. That Wilder was too heavy.

Come fight night, the contrast could not have been greater. Granted access to Fury's dressing room, you could see his mindset: born to fight, up for these occasions. The mood in the bowels of the MGM Grand Garden Arena was just a glimpse inside the mind of the heavyweight.

Not once, from the moment he walked into the casino resort to the wonderful performance that is already written into boxing history, did Fury show vulnerability or nerves. The pressure was all left in the training camp, in the conquering of his mental illness. Cool, calm, collected was Fury, having fun in a preparation room with over 20 people in there: the eight men who had lived with him through eight weeks on the outskirts of Sin City in a home your correspondent visited one month before the fight, where, indeed, the atmosphere was much the same. All eyes were on Fury, who began to go through his paces, his shapes, with SugarHill Steward as the music of James Brown broke out. It is no lie when Fury says that having a fight is as regular a process for him as brushing his teeth in the morning or heading down to the dump in Morecambe with bins full of rubbish and nappies from his life at home with wife Paris and their five children.

I had the privilege of being invited to see inside Fury's dressing room when he fought Wilder the first time in Los Angeles, 15 months earlier, and the mood was edgier, more nervous for their man. There was a different atmosphere this time in spite of the demands of the television cameras on this huge occasion being even greater. It was more a celebration, a greater self-belief both from the fighter and his team. They knew the plan; they knew their man was capable of implementing it. They knew. So did Fury. Simply because he was born to do it.

Then off Fury went, on his throne, to his destiny with Deontay in the ring. The Gypsy King reduced the dangerous knockout artist to a forlorn figure, beaten up, bleeding from the ear, bullied to the level that the Alabamian's corner threw in the towel in the seventh round after an unabated beating. It was offensively brilliant and defensively savvy. He imposed himself from the opening round, peppering Wilder with a hard, powerful jab, never allowing the American a foothold. It was masterful.

Fury proved to be correct in assuming that Wilder could not deal with "educated pressure."

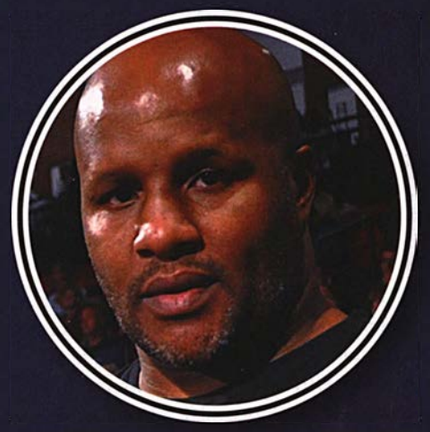
When his right hands landed, they landed with authority, pummeling the face of his foe with such regularity that the fallen champion's face was soon etched with the confusion that colors a fighter being demolished. Fury put Wilder down hard in the third and then with a winging body shot in the fifth stanza, by which time "The Hammer from Alabama" was simply a confused man.

Then that valedictory song; Fury sang "American Pie" from the ring and the entire arena joined in.

Given Fury's story, moreover, of beating depression and obesity, it has to rank as one of the greatest comebacks ever. Not just in sport. But in life.

Fury and family got the game plan right. They got the weight right. They got the timing right. They also knew that "a boxer beats a puncher." And a heavy, clever boxer with a game plan to dismantle can bully the bully. We need not worry. They will go at it again in several months' time. It will build and build again. Let's hope by then that Wilder has been rebuilt, walking to the ring without a suit weighing 45 pounds, and that Fury will be hungry again having been made a saint by his fans, if not his visit to Rome. These are the days of their lives in the heavyweight division. Fury and Wilder. And the world looks on, entertained, amused, enthralled as the two giants, both magnificent men and human beings, prepare again as two tribes going to war. Bring on Part 3.

Gareth A Davies is a boxing writer with the London Telegraph.



MICHAEL MOORER: GREATEST HITS

AFTER HOLDING A TITLE AT 175 POUNDS, **MICHAEL MOORER** STEPPED UP TO HEAVYWEIGHT AND BECAME THE FIRST-EVER SOUTHPAW CHAMPION

By **Anson Wainwright**

Michael Moorer fought for respect at the legendary Kronk Gym in Detroit long before he was known to boxing fans worldwide as one of the top heavyweights of the 1990s.

The second-oldest of six children to a single mother, he was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 12, 1967.

"I left Brooklyn at a young age," Moorer told The Ring. "I grew up in a small town right outside Pittsburgh, called Monessen. It was a steel-mill town, a heavy-populated town that has since diminished, but there was a lot of hardworking steel workers there."

One such steel-mill worker was Moorer's grandfather, a positive male influence on him during his formative years. When Moorer was 10 years old, he helped his grandfather in the garden, which turned out to be an unlikely road to boxing.

"I noticed after I was finished working he would always be gone," recalled Moorer. "After a while, I picked up on him leaving at a certain time. So he was leaving one day and I was finished and he didn't know, and I said, 'Granddad, can I go with you?' He said, 'Oh no, boy, you've got to finish work.' I said, 'I'm done.' He looked around and said, 'Come on, boy.' So he took me.

Michael Moorer was a destroyer as a young light heavyweight and a history-maker as a heavyweight champion.

"As we walked in the gym for the first time, I didn't know my grandfather was a trainer. I saw some guys sparring and I sat down and watched for about 15 minutes, and I jumped up and walked over to the heavy bag and just started punching it. My grandfather had said he'd heard thumps. And, as they say, the rest is history. After that day, I was a regular at the Charleroi Athletic Club."

Moorer's grandfather, Henry Smith, had won the New York Golden Gloves championships in 1953 and had sparred with the legendary Archie Moore.

Moorer was a talented football player in high school, during which time he boxed as an amateur. He found his boxing stride between Olympic cycles, and in 1985 he was the runner-up to Tim Littles at the American Boxing Federation tournament. The following year, he won a national title and a bronze medal at the inaugural Goodwill Games in Moscow. Moorer finished his amateur career with a 48-16 record.

That got the attention of Alex Shear, who was the amateur boxing coach for Kronk, and Moorer signed a professional contract with Emanuel Steward. Fighting as a light heavyweight, he made his debut in March 1988.

"I knew I was good, but knowing the magnitude of where I was and what I was doing, I had no clue. That was work for me," he said. "Being around Thomas Hearns, Gerald McClellan, Hilmer Kenty – all them guys – it was fascinating. Those are my teammates. I had to establish myself, because I was the new guy."

It didn't take the young southpaw long. He kept an active schedule, boxing once a month, winning his first 11 bouts inside the distance. Nobody went past the fourth round with him. In December 1988, Steward was convinced of his protege's talent enough to match Moorer against the more experienced Ramzi Hassan for the inaugural WBO 175-pound title.

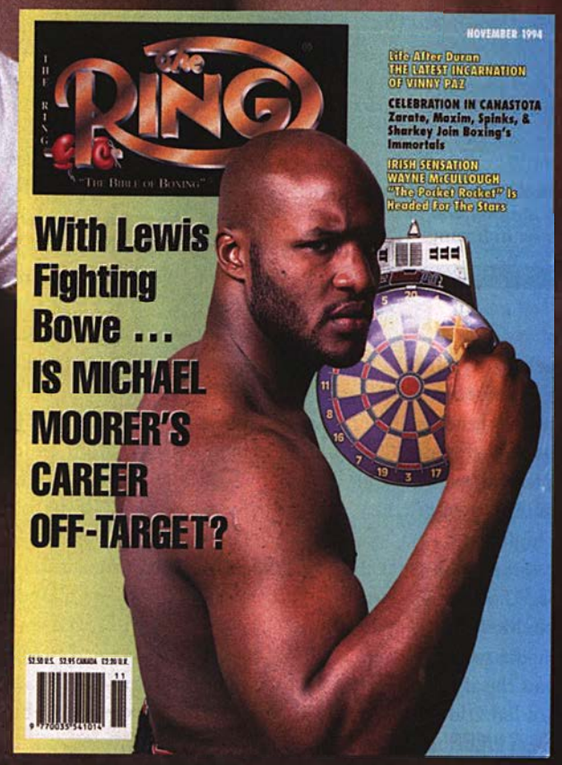
Hassan was stopped in five rounds. Moorer retained the title nine times over the next two years.

There was always talk about unification bouts with Prince Charles Williams and Virgil Hill, but no one wanted to fight Moorer; he was a southpaw and a dangerous puncher.

The battle with making weight intensified, and the decision was taken to bypass the unfashionable cruiserweight division (190-pound limit at the time) and go straight to heavyweight.

"At first, I never struggled. But after a while, I was maturing into a man and my body was growing rapidly," he explained. "I used to walk around at 206 pounds, and I used to get to 173. I wouldn't eat. I *couldn't* eat. I had to work out all the time and lose weight.

"Back then, Emanuel had us at his house. I lived across the street, but I always stayed at his house for training camp. Thomas Hearns would be there, Gerald McClellan would be there, and we'd eat our breakfast. I would have a boiled



egg, that's it, and I'd be so angry. I had that chip on my shoulder because I couldn't eat. I wanted to fight.

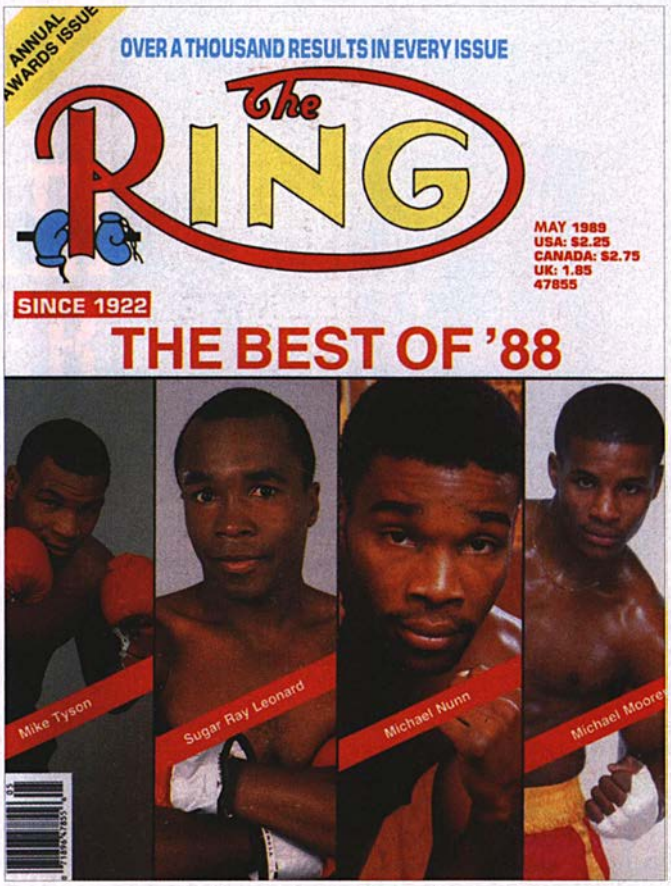
"After so long, I fought a guy, Danny Stonewalker, at the Civic Arena, Pittsburgh – that was my last fight (at 175 pounds). I said, 'I can't make weight. I'm not going to make weight anymore.' I told Emanuel, 'I don't want to lose weight anymore. From here on, I'm going to fight wherever I want.'

"He said, 'Oh, man, you've got to go to heavyweight.' I said, 'I'll go to heavyweight, cause I don't want to lose no more weight.' He was always honest with me."

Moorer eased himself into the new division with six wins before meeting dangerous gatekeeper Bert Cooper for the vacant WBO heavyweight title. The two traded knockdowns in a firefight. The younger Moorer stopped Cooper in the fifth round to become the first southpaw heavyweight titleholder. It was the last fight Moorer had with Steward; he went on to train under George Benton and later Teddy Atlas.

Moorer vacated the lesser-known title and went in search of greater riches, which came five wins and two years later, when, as the mandatory challenger, he met universally recognized champ Evander Holyfield for the IBF and WBA titles. He recovered from a second-round knockdown to edge Holyfield by majority decision, but the physical toll of a grueling bout had a lasting effect on his body.

"I remember going to the hospital just to get checked out," he said of his career-best win. "I was so tired. My body hurt so bad. People don't understand as soon as that bell rings for the final round, immediately you just fall apart. You're hurting from the waist up; you're torn up. Your body is so sore. You've got to rest, take pills, sit in cold baths, heal your body after that. It takes two-and-a-half to three weeks for your body to get back in shape, to come down off that high. Your adrenaline is pumped. I would stay up for at least three, four days, sometimes a week, coming down off the adrenaline high."



In just the first year of his pro career, Moorer was already one of the biggest names in boxing.

When he returned, he met the iconic George Foreman in his first title defense. Moorer, a decided odds and media favorite going into the bout, had the fight in hand until the Golden Oldie landed a picture-perfect right hand to score a sensational knockout.

Moorer was determined to not let that be the lasting memory of him and regained the IBF title from Axel Schulz 18 months later. He made two successful defenses before dropping the belt to Holyfield in a rematch in November 1997.

"Double M" retired and returned before finally walking away in 2008. He initially worked as a coach at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood, California.

Throughout his career, Moorer was known for his surly demeanor.

"I needed that edge because I didn't know what was out there," he explained. "I was going into the world blinded, because I didn't have any guidance. I picked up and kept my mouth shut and did what I had to do. By fighting, I got the respect."

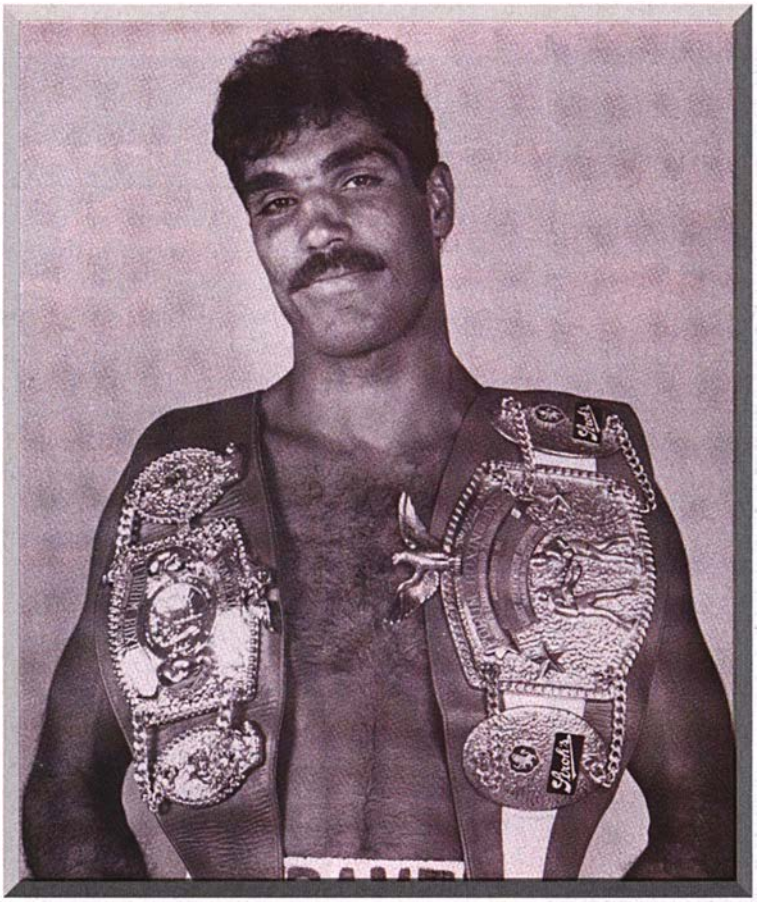
Moorer feels strongly that fighters are exploited for other people's gain, and he was keen to speak on the subject.

"Boxing does nothing for fighters," he said. "Fighters are used all the time to sign autographs, take pictures to make publicity for the company we're doing it for. But what do we get out of it? A couple hundred dollars? Couple thousand, maybe? That's not cool."

Moorer, now 52, lives in South Florida. He has four children and stays active working with clients who like to stay in shape. He enjoys watching the Pittsburgh Steelers and is a gun enthusiast.

"I stay in my own lane and mind my own business," he said of his preference for the quiet life.

Here's what he had to say about six of his most memorable nights in the ring:

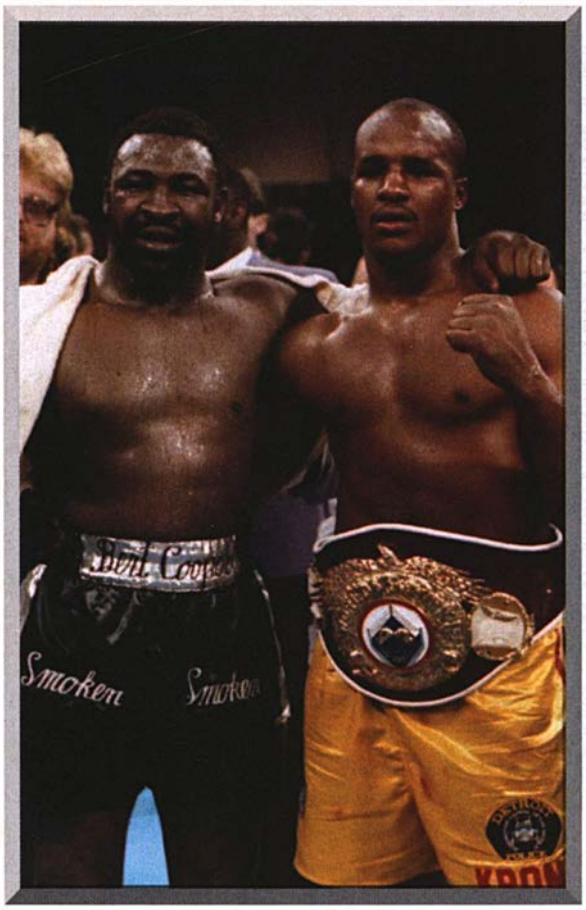


RAMZI HASSAN

December 3, 1988, Brook Park, Ohio •
Titles: vacant WBO light heavyweight

"That was my 12th pro fight. Emanuel knew the type of fighter that I was, and he knew I could go in there and do what I had to do. Ramzi was considered a tough guy, but I knew my ability because I was coming from the Kronk Gym. I'd had probably 10 fights under my belt maybe equal to 10 rounds, but I got all my rounds in the gym. Because in the gym, fights were always harder because they were trying to make a name for themselves, but I had to make a name for myself. I went in there and did what I had to do. The thing is, when you're young like that, you don't anticipate (winning a world title). Your mind isn't thinking that far ahead. You just want to be the best you can possibly be. I never thought I was going to be a world champion. I just knew how to fight, and I liked to fight. I would always get better. So did the reward as you got better, and rewards came with championship belts and things like that."

RESULT: MOORER TKO 5

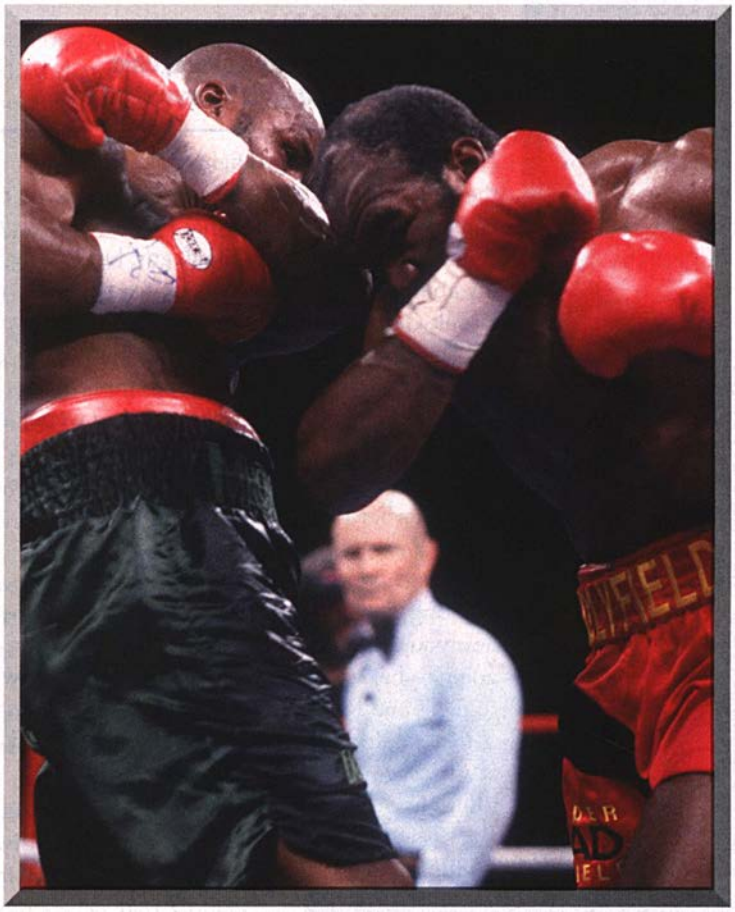


BERT COOPER

May 15, 1992, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, New Jersey •
Titles: vacant WBO heavyweight

"Ray Mercer was supposed to fight me, but he didn't want to fight, so I fought for the vacant title with Bert. Bert came to fight. When I fought Bert, him and I just went at it. He hurt me. I was down (twice), but it's the heart of a champion to get up and fight. He was a guy that always came to fight, so I knew I was going to have a tough fight. But Emanuel knew what he had. He might have got scared when he saw me get knocked down, but then he said, 'Well, now it's time to see… let's see what you've got.' When you go down, people think that's the end, and some people in their mind are beaten because they go down. They think the fight's over; they think they're beaten, and the guy has an advantage over them. It doesn't work that way with me. Now it's time to fight. When I go down, 'Oh, this motherfucker hit me like that? Now it's time to fight.' I had to break him down, and I think being a southpaw, I had an advantage as well. I think I always had the advantage being a southpaw, because the jab is coming in from a totally different angle. The WBO wasn't that recognized back then. I gave it up because back then, Evander Holyfield had the WBA and IBF titles. So in order for me to fight for those titles, I had to vacate."

RESULT: MOORER TKO 5



EVANDER HOLYFIELD

April 22, 1994, Caesars Palace, Las Vegas • Titles: IBF/WBA heavyweight

"They were all big fights – it's just this was for the title. I prepared right; I did everything the right way, and everything was good. I knew I could win that fight. I was confident. I knew I was fighting a guy that was always going to be 100 percent at all times. What I had to do was go out there and establish, dictate and overcome, and I became the champ. I went in there and did what I had to do. The second round, when I got knocked down, I wasn't hurt. It was a flash knockdown, and I got back into the groove of things. I'm one of very few to win the light heavyweight and heavyweight championships. They tried to throw something in that Evander had a heart attack in the ring, which was nonsense. He just got beat by the better guy that night. Evander is always going to be a good guy. He studies you. I was the man who beat the man who beat the man, so I was the guy. Everyone knew who I was, but they knew who Evander was three times-fold over me. Evander is synonymous with boxing."

RESULT: MOORER MD 12

GEORGE FOREMAN

November 5, 1994, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: IBF/WBA heavyweight

"I had a great training camp in Palm Springs, California. I had great sparring. Everything was fine for this fight. I remember George saying one time we were at a press conference, 'Take them sunglasses off; let them see your eyes.' I'm no fool; you wanted to see my eyes. That fight with George, I got careless. That's it. I was in front. Teddy had always told me, 'Michael, don't stand in front of him. He looks old but he hits like a sledgehammer; he always carries that sledgehammer.' Hey, I got caught. I was beating him and I got caught. That's part of boxing. I thought I could get up. That punch put 32 stitches in my lip. That was it. He slid it right in there perfectly. I was upset because I let my son down. I wasn't worried about anyone else, because you win them and lose them. I just didn't want my son – at the time he was young – to see me hurt and upset. That's what was important to me. George and I became very good friends. He's a great man. His family, they're great people."

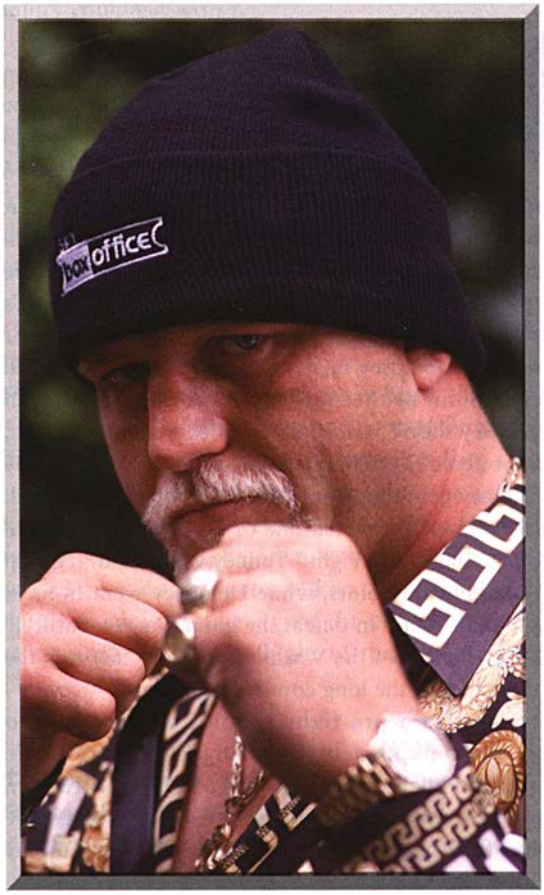
RESULT: FOREMAN KO 10

AXEL SCHULZ

June 22, 1996, Westfalen Stadion, Dortmund, Germany • Titles: vacant IBF heavyweight

"Leading up to that fight, I was over there for a while and they had a great team who they sent me that looked out for everything. The only thing I didn't like was the Autobahn … oomph! They were going fast. I sat in the back and just closed my eyes. Axel Schulz, he had a name; he was a big guy in Dortmund, Germany. Inside that stadium was electrifying that night. The stadium was huge. I felt good. I didn't feel like I was at a disadvantage. I felt everything was even, on the up and up. It was never on my mind about redemption; it was just about winning the fight. I thought I was more effective in using the jab and throwing combinations, catching him off-balance. I figured I won the fight, but I was in a different country, so you never know. It was a goal back then to win the heavyweight title again, in a different country, and I'm going to do it the way I want to do it. And I could go home and show my son the heavyweight title."

RESULT: MOORER SD 12



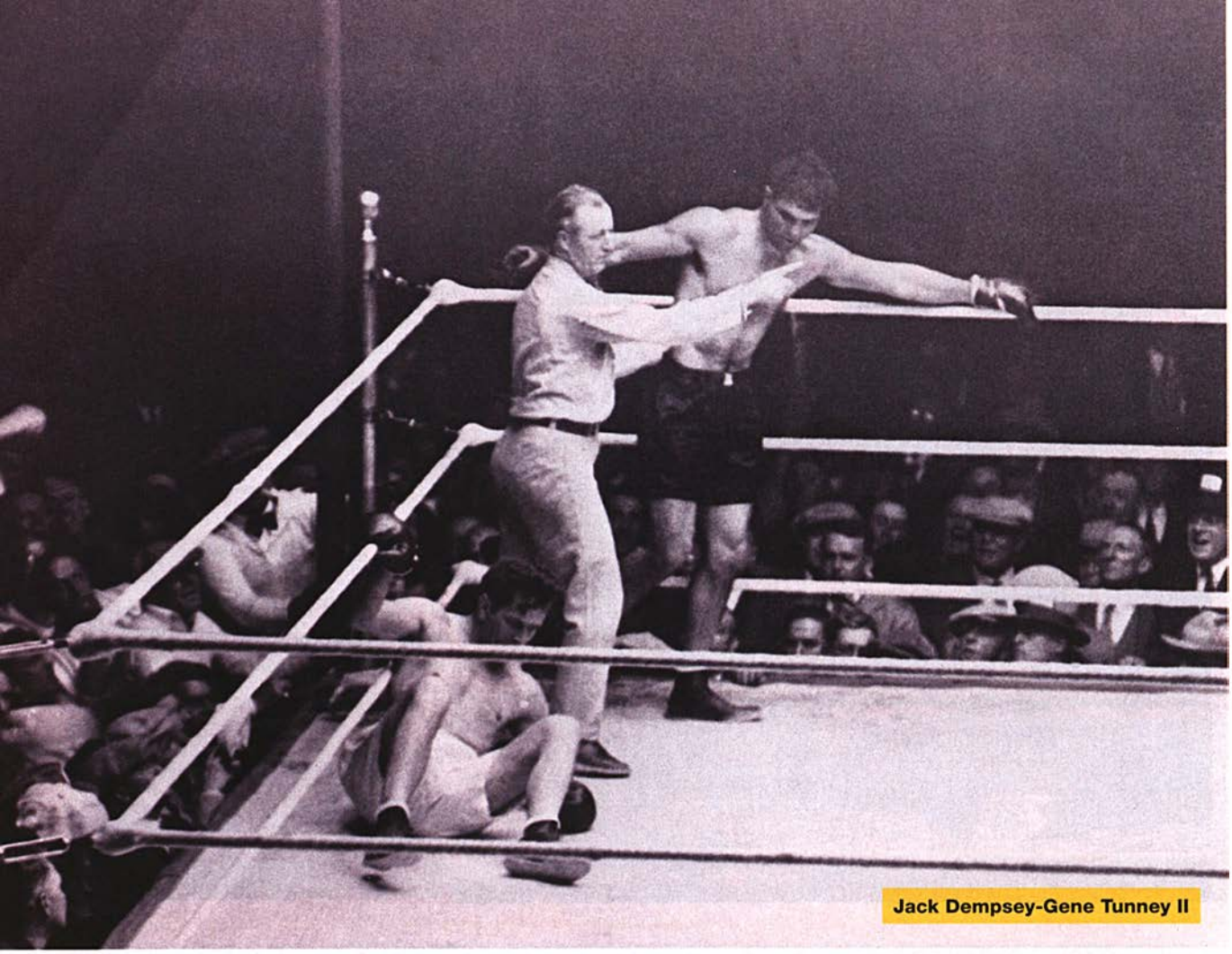
FRANS BOTHA

November 9, 1996, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: IBF heavyweight

"I was the type of guy, and people still say to this day, 'Michael Moorer don't play.' I was always serious, because this is my life. This is my job. You don't play boxing. Francois Botha had a reputation of being a tough guy – he did this, he did that – and then it was my turn to fight him. So he was very confident. I was never a guy who played into people's antics. We were in the face-off after the weigh-in, he kept acting like he was going to throw his right hand, like he was going to knock me out, and everybody was going, 'Oooh!' I just looked at him and gave him the middle finger. That was it. I didn't say two words, I just gave him the middle finger and the whole place erupted. I wanted to punish Francois. I wanted to beat him a little bit. He was a little cocky for me. Don't do this cocky shit with me. This is boxing. If I win, if I lose, let's get along. We can talk shit leading up to the fight and during the fight, but let's be cool, cordial and respect each other. When you don't respect me, there's gonna be a problem. I'm going to respect you until you disrespect me. That's how I see boxing should have been always. I punished him."

RESULT: MOORER TKO 12

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.



Jack Dempsey-Gene Tunney II

REDOS AND REDON'TS

HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP REMATCHES HAVE SPAWNED SOME OF THE BEST AND WORST MOMENTS IN BOXING

By **Don Stradley**

Rematches for the heavyweight championship have run the gamut from the dramatic to the ridiculous. Of course, the same could be said of any weight class, but with Tyson Fury-Deontay Wilder II still on everyone's mind, it's tempting to look back at how rematches for the heavyweight laurels have played out in the past.

Here are five of the best.

JACK DEMPSEY-GENE TUNNEY II

Soldier Field, Chicago • September 22, 1927

For sheer controversy and spectacle, the Dempsey-Tunney rematch stands alone. Tunney had taken the laurels from Dempsey one year earlier by 10-round decision, and promoter Tex Rickard correctly predicted a second bout would be a blockbuster event. Dempsey had become an American icon by then, and his effort to reclaim the title drew a whopping 104,943 to Soldier Field, creating boxing's first $2 million gate. After clumsily chasing Tunney for several rounds, Dempsey finally caught him in the seventh and pounded him to the canvas. The controversy began when Dempsey didn't immediately go to a neutral corner, preventing referee Dave Barry from starting the count. By the time Tunney got to his feet, 13 or 14 seconds had passed.

Dempsey's blunder created one of boxing's most fabled nights, "The Long Count Fight." Tunney was able to regroup and win the bout on points, while Dempsey went home a bigger star than ever. "In defeat, he gained more stature," wrote Shirley Povich of the Washington Post. "He was the loser in the battle of the long count, yet the hero."

There was also a pre-fight subplot where Chicago gangsters were supposedly backing Dempsey, while mobsters from Philadelphia were allegedly behind Tunney. Nothing was ever proven, but the gossip added to the fight's colorful legend. The Ring chose Dempsey-Tunney II as Fight of the Year.

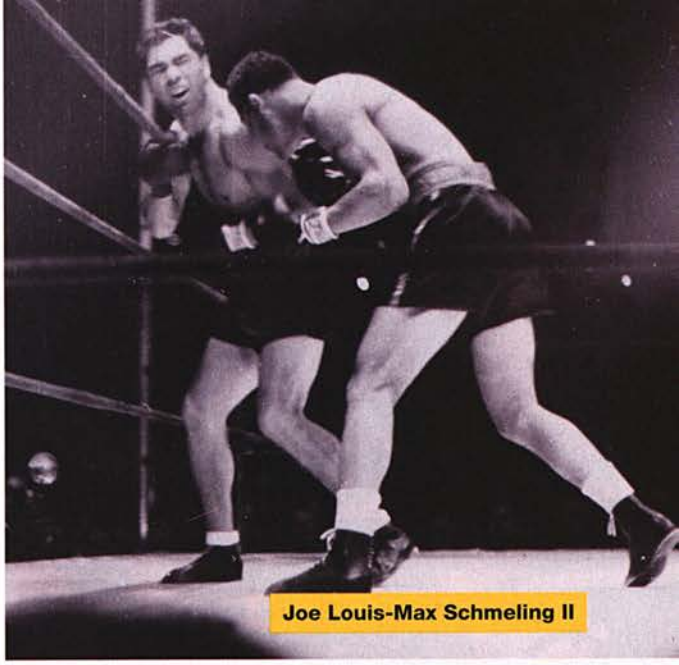
JOE LOUIS-MAX SCHMELING II

Yankee Stadium, The Bronx, New York • June 22, 1938

Technically, this one doesn't count. The first time they met, when Schmeling stopped Louis in 12, no title was at stake. By the time of the rematch, however, Louis was the heavyweight champion and Schmeling had become the favorite fighter of Nazi Germany. As the world seemed to be lurching toward a major war, the fight took on profound implications.

Cheered on by a crowd of more than 70,000, "The Brown Bomber" belted Schmeling to the canvas three times before the fight was stopped at 2:04 of the opening round. Referee Arthur Donovan, reported The New York Times, "could have counted off a century and Max would not have regained his feet." The German ended up in the hospital, and Louis' legend was born.

Despite the history-making vibe of the fight, Louis-Schmeling II wasn't The Ring's Fight of the Year for 1938. That honor went to the first Henry Armstrong-Lou Ambers fight. Louis did, however, earn Fighter of the Year honors.



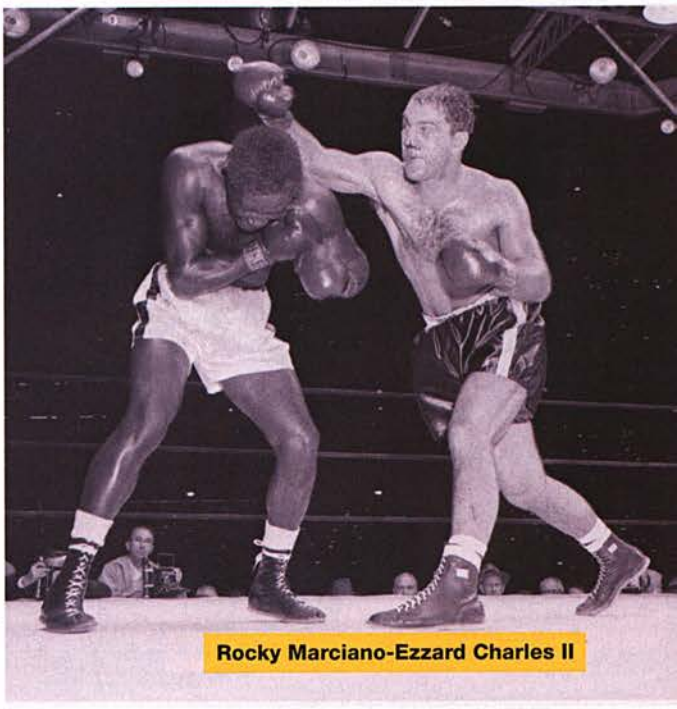
Joe Louis-Max Schmeling II

ROCKY MARCIANO-EZZARD CHARLES II

Yankee Stadium, The Bronx, New York • September 17, 1954

Marciano had won a hard-fought 15-round decision over Charles three months earlier and seemed on his way to a repeat victory, but in the sixth round he came out of an exchange with his nose badly cut. Whether it was from a punch or an elbow was never determined, but the fight became highly dramatic. The ringside doctor later denied that he was going to stop the bout, but Marciano was concerned that the injury could get worse.

Wanting to remain champion a little longer, Marciano poured on the pressure until Charles was knocked down and counted out at 2:36 of Round 8. It had been a rough, dirty fight, and though it wasn't quite as good as their first bout, Marciano-Charles II was selected by The Ring as Fight of the Year for 1954. At the time, Marciano was criticized for his dirty style, but history remembered this one as another of his courageous performances.

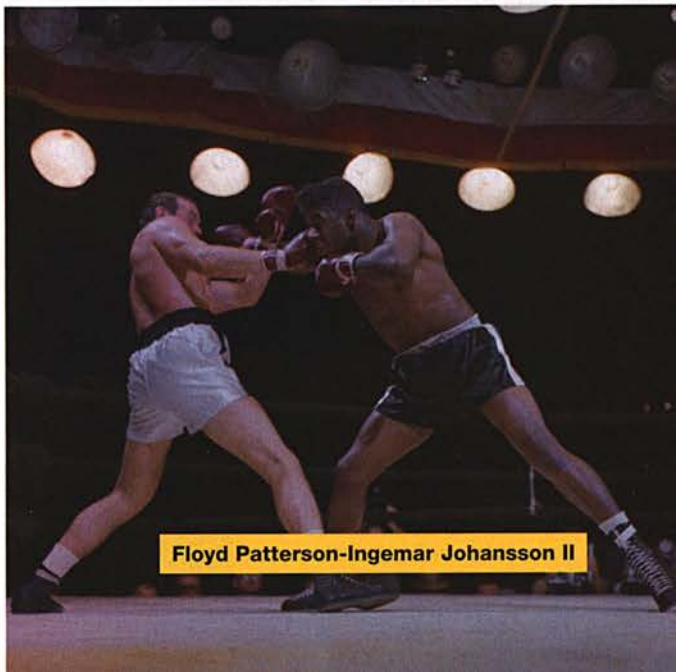


Rocky Marciano-Ezzard Charles II

FLOYD PATTERSON-INGEMAR JOHANSSON II

Polo Grounds, New York, New York • June 20, 1960

"Ingo" had demolished Patterson in their first bout, dropping him seven times in the third round before the fight was stopped and the Swedish playboy took the title. Angry with himself for losing, Patterson trained with a monkish intensity for the second bout. Before more than 31,000 fans, Patterson scored a vicious fifth-round knockout and became the first man to regain the heavyweight championship. The Ring recognized the bout as Fight of the Year, and Patterson as Fighter of the Year.

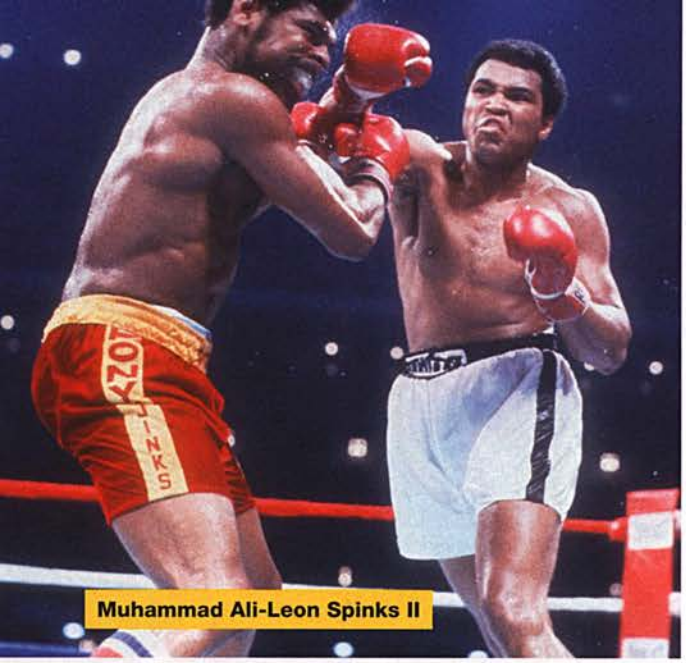


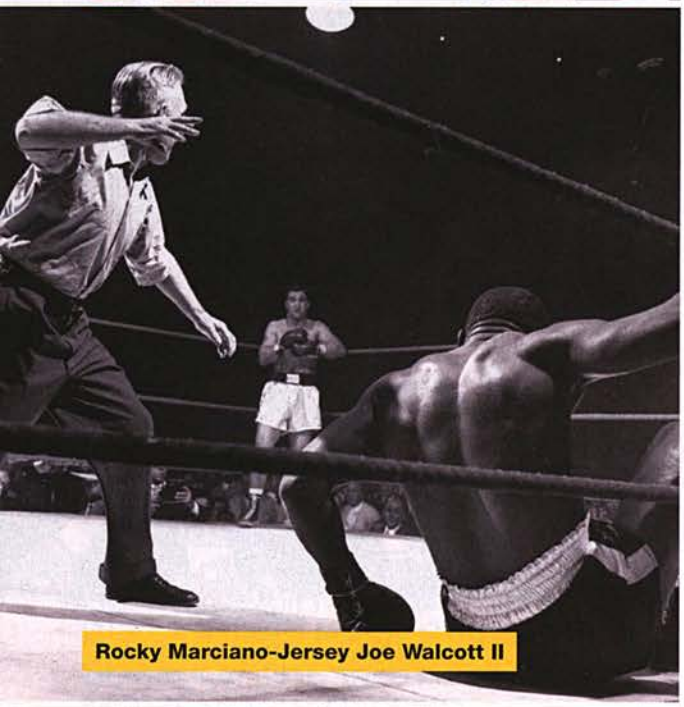
Floyd Patterson-Ingemar Johansson II

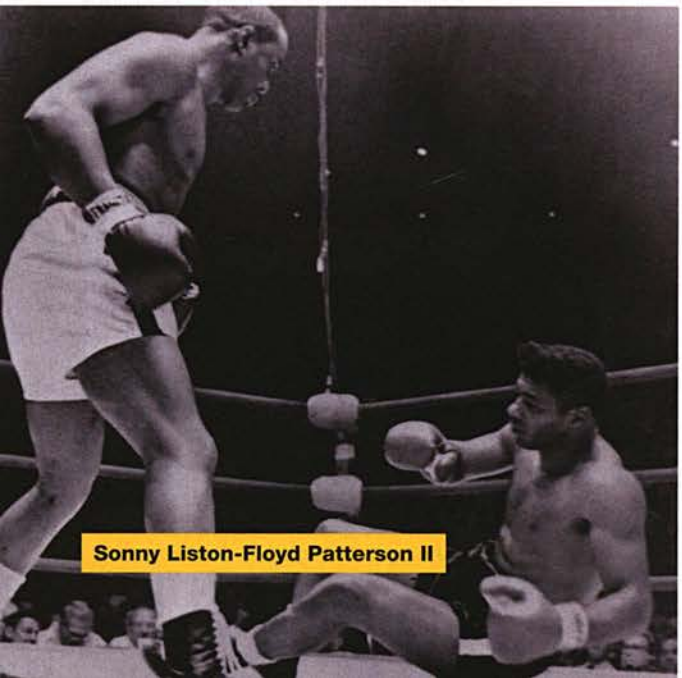
MUHAMMAD ALI-LEON SPINKS II

The Superdome, New Orleans • September 15, 1978

The first fight was better, with more toe-to-toe action, but this one had the ending everyone wanted. Ali, a battle-weary 36,


Muhammad Ali-Leon Spinks II


Rocky Marciano-Jersey Joe Walcott II


Sonny Liston-Floyd Patterson II

boxed a smart fight and won a 15-round unanimous decision over his younger opponent. By regaining the title he'd lost earlier in the year, he became the first three-time heavyweight titleholder. Ali-Spinks II was also one of the most viewed sporting events of 1978. The bout's 46.7 television rating on ABC nearly matched that year's Super Bowl and was higher than the average viewership for the year's World Series.

And five of the worst....

ROCKY MARCIANO-JERSEY JOE WALCOTT II

Chicago Stadium, Chicago • May 15, 1953

Their first bout, which saw Marciano win the championship by a 13th-round knockout, was one of the great heavyweight fights of all time. The rematch was a different story. Before a paid crowd of 13,266 and an NBC audience, the bout had barely started when Walcott fell from what looked like a left hook followed by a short right. He simply sat on the canvas, looking to his corner for advice. And there he remained, counted out at 2:25 of the first round. Then he rose, stamping his feet, complaining of a fast count. The fight, wrote Philadelphia columnist Lance McCurley, had been so "nauseating and disgusting and unbelievable" that a thorough investigation was in order. Baltimore sportswriter Jesse Linthicum said the bizarre ending "set boxing back 10 years."

Though referee Frank Sikora affirmed Walcott was dazed, and Marciano felt he'd landed a good punch, many believed Walcott had simply given up right there on the canvas. Regardless of why Walcott didn't get up, Marciano-Walcott II went down as a stinker.

SONNY LISTON-FLOYD PATTERSON II

The Convention Center, Las Vegas • July 22, 1963

By the time Patterson was counted out at 2:10 of Round 1, the 7,816 customers at the Las Vegas Convention Center must have been kicking themselves. He'd crashed to the canvas three times, knocked there by the hefty fists of defending heavyweight champion Sonny Liston. It was more or less a faithful replay of their previous match of a year earlier, when Liston had stopped Patterson in one round in Chicago.

Patterson and Liston could've fought 50 times and Liston would've won all 50, most of them in the first round. The audience had suspected as much going in. Yet they not only bought tickets in Las Vegas, but also filled up 143 closed-circuit venues around the country. (A riot broke out at a Camden, New Jersey, theater when 600 fans were turned away.) Even when the result was a foregone conclusion, a rematch for the heavyweight championship was big business.

MUHAMMAD ALI-SONNY LISTON II

Central Maine Civic Center, Lewiston, Maine • May 25, 1965

To find the nadir of heavyweight title rematches, one might consider this farce from 1965. After Liston flopped to the canvas in the first round from Ali's so-called "phantom punch," all hell broke loose. When The Ring's founder, Nat Fleischer, informed the timekeeper that Liston hadn't beaten

the 10 count, Ali retained the title. (Fittingly, the referee was Walcott, who had done his own suspicious flop against Marciano years earlier.)

LENNOX LEWIS-OLIVER MCCALL II

Hilton Hotel, Las Vegas • February 7, 1997

This catastrophe had one of the strangest endings in boxing history. McCall had KO'd Lewis and taken the WBC belt in 1994, but a perfect storm of boxing politics had them fighting for the vacant WBC title in 1997. When McCall had a sort of mental breakdown and started crying during the fight, referee Mills Lane had no choice but to stop the action at 0:55 of Round 5 and give the bout to Lewis by TKO.

EVANDER HOLYFIELD-MIKE TYSON II

MGM Grand, Las Vegas • June 28, 1997

Between this night, when Tyson was disqualified for biting Holyfield's ears, and the 1993 return bout with Riddick Bowe, which was interrupted by a paraglider who flew into the arena and crashed into the ring, Holyfield should get a special award for appearing in odd title rematches. Tyson claimed he'd grown tired of Holyfield butting him, which inspired his feeding frenzy. After the fight, in a televised statement, he said that he had simply snapped. "I couldn't tell you why I acted exactly as I did," Tyson said.

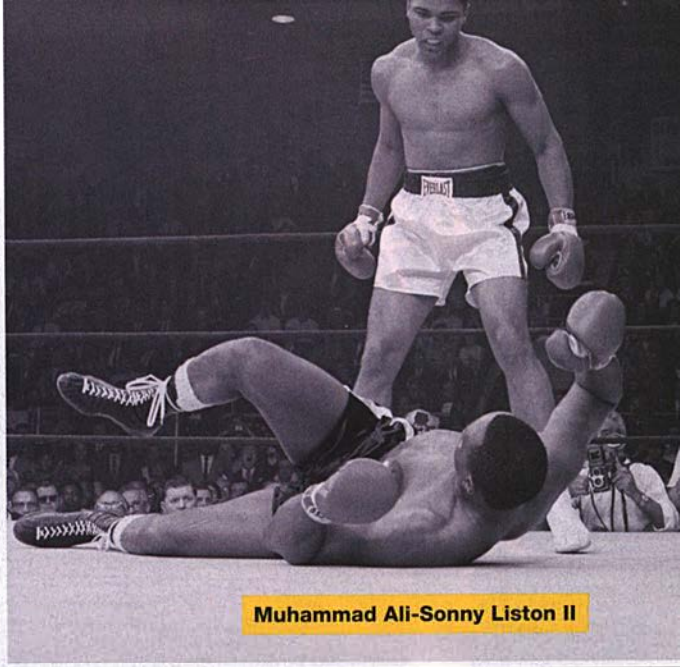
At the time, Tyson-Holyfield II was the richest fight to date, with Tyson guaranteed $30 million and Holyfield $35 million. It also smashed all records for pay-per-view buys and closed-circuit sales. But with the eyes of the world upon it, boxing failed on this night. Tyson brought the business back to the days of primitive man. "It's not funny," wrote Los Angeles Times columnist Jim Murray. "It's a sad story."

It was a strange time, the 1990s, with all of that crying, biting and paragliding. It seemed heavyweight title rematches should come with a disclaimer: Buyer beware.

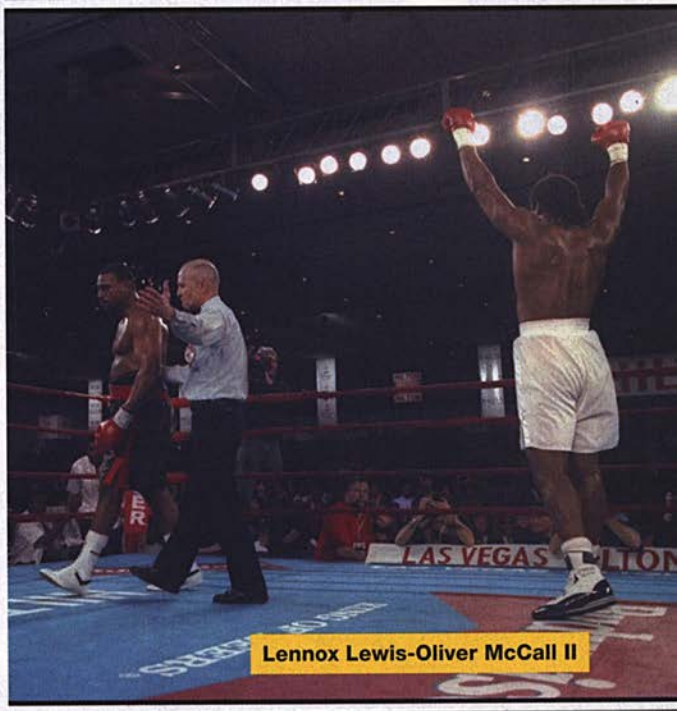
Then, as the next century began, it was a heavyweight championship rematch that ushered in the new era. Lennox Lewis, having lost the crown seven months earlier to Hasim Rahman, scored a wicked fourth-round KO of Rahman to reclaim his spot as the world's top heavyweight. Lewis' handiwork, courtesy of a stunning right cross, was chosen as The Ring's KO of the Year for 2001.

In more recent times, the Anthony Joshua-Andy Ruiz Jr. rematch for a bunch of alphabet belts lacked the fireworks that made their first fight so remarkable. It certainly didn't leave anyone hungering for a rubber match. But when heavyweights meet a second time for one of the top prizes in all of sports, you're liable to get anything, from a long count to a phantom punch. And did we tell you about all of the heavyweight title rematches that were marred by controversial scoring? Let's see, there was Schmeling-Sharkey II, and Walcott-Charles II, and Holmes-Spinks II, and Dokes-Weaver II ...

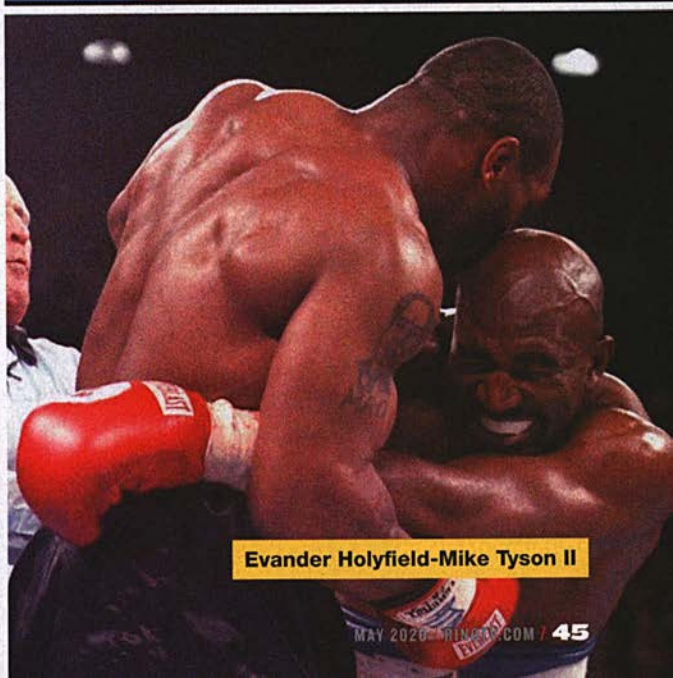
Well, you get it. Rematches for the heavyweight title have been varied and unpredictable. You might be thrilled. You might be disappointed. But to borrow a line from that gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson, you buy the ticket, you take the ride.



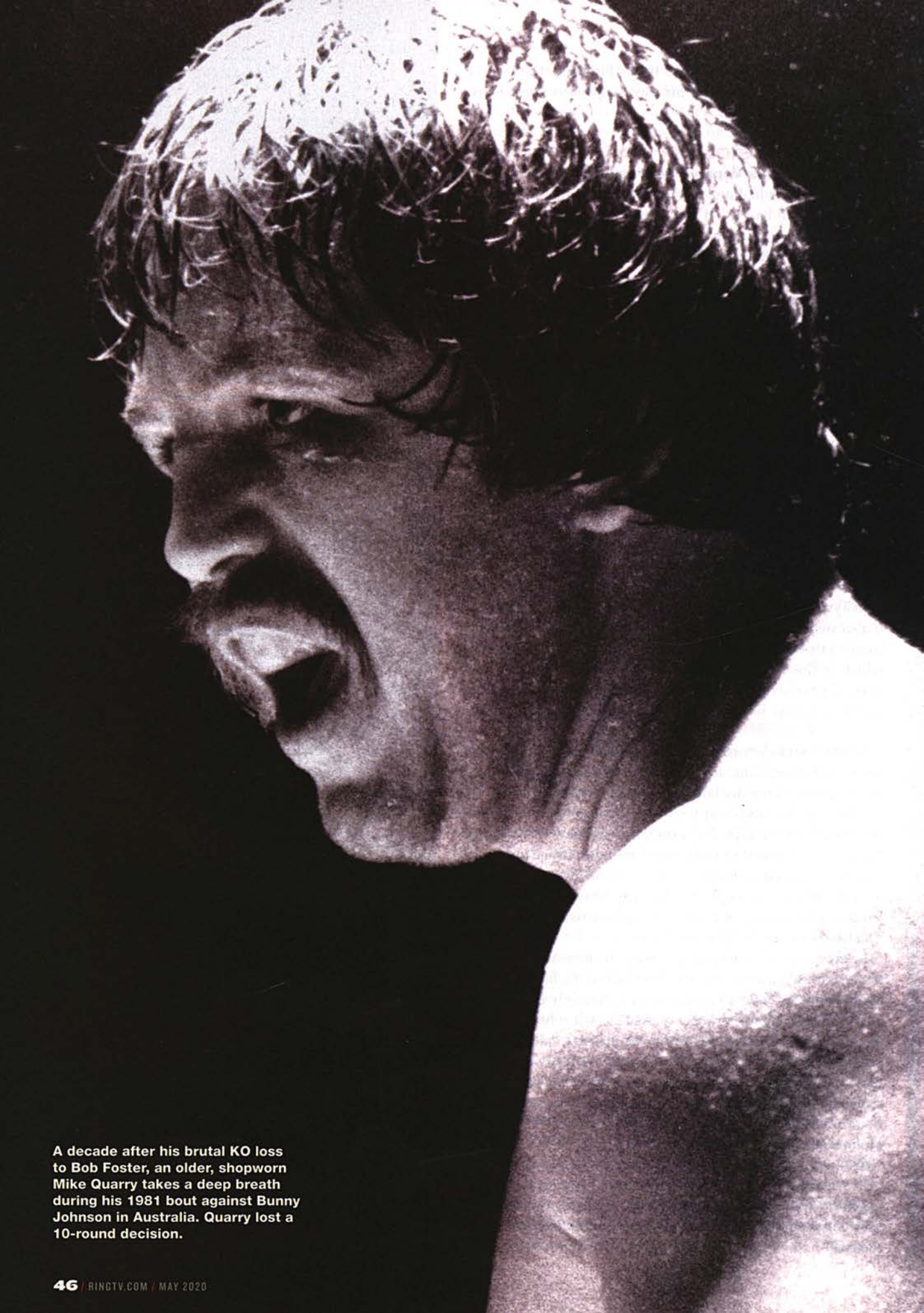
Muhammad Ali-Sonny Liston II



Lennox Lewis-Oliver McCall II



Evander Holyfield-Mike Tyson II



A decade after his brutal KO loss to Bob Foster, an older, shopworn Mike Quarry takes a deep breath during his 1981 bout against Bunny Johnson in Australia. Quarry lost a 10-round decision.

SHATTERED: THE NIGHT MIKE QUARRY CHALLENGED BOB FOSTER

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS AN ABRIDGED CHAPTER – "LIVED FORWARD, LEARNED BACKWARDS" – FROM THE BOOK *SPORTING BLOOD: TALES FROM THE DARK SIDE OF BOXING*

By **Carlos Acevedo**

No one who saw the crushing blow would ever forget it; Mike Quarry, however, would never remember it. Quarry, a perennial light heavyweight fringe contender throughout the 1970s, and a minor celebrity overshadowed by his more famous older brother, Jerry, was undefeated when he challenged Bob Foster for the world title on June 27, 1972. That was the night his dreams were shattered instead of fulfilled.

Mike Quarry was born on March 4, 1951, in Bakersfield, California. His family, made up of hard-bitten scrappers from Arkansas on one side and Oklahoma on the other, was a sprawling, brawling clan that personified dysfunction. Wherever the Quarrys went, some sort of ruckus – usually involving knuckles – was sure to follow.

His father, Jack Quarry, was raised during the Great Depression and his early life was as strenuous as the circumstances that surrounded it. A restless bully who aborted an amateur career as a boxer because of psoriasis, Jack grew up in labor camps in Northern California after his family had abandoned the parched scrubland of Oklahoma. Essentially, Jack was part of the Dust Bowl, whose participants were immortalized (and slightly romanticized) by John Steinbeck in The Grapes of Wrath.

By his mid-teens, Jack was riding the rods and scrambling in hobo jungles, just as Jack Dempsey had done 20 years earlier. "When I was 14," he told People magazine, "I chopped cotton for one dollar a day in Roswell, New Mexico. You could go out on Sunday and fight three rounds for three dollars – that was three days' work." After marrying, Jack remained a drifter of sorts, moving his ever-increasing family up and down California: Glendale, Downey, Midway City, Shafter, Oakland.

Jack Quarry was a born loser whose inability to hold a job marked him as more than just antiauthoritarian; his bleak outlook on life, symbolized by a

Quarry relaxes at the hotel the day before his match with British heavyweight Bunny Johnson.

FAIRFAX MEDIA ARCHIVES

pair of tattoos stretched across his knuckles that read "Hard Luck," bordered on sociopathic. But when he began teaching his sons Jimmy and Jerry to box, he saw the possibility of a future materializing. For Jack Quarry, life had been postponed for far too long. Now, the proverbial Good Times were here. With Jerry, a natural pro who wielded both a crippling left hook and a cinderblock chin, Jack found himself, improbably, blessed. Eventually, he had the most popular draw on the West Coast – and in the only division that mattered: heavyweight. Soon the money began rolling in. By 1967, Jerry was packing the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles and was regarded as a potential future heavyweight champion of the world. His little brother, Mike, idolized him and soon began hitting the gym to emulate him.

From the beginning, Mike Quarry, six years younger than his famous brother, was an afterthought. Even his amateur career was cut short when he was disqualified in an Olympic tryout for using the ropes for leverage. After that fiasco, Quarry turned professional. He was still in high school when he made his debut on April 18, 1969, a five-round decision over James Dick on the undercard of Jose Napoles-Curtis Cokes I. Without a second thought, Jack put him on a throwback road not seen regularly since the 1940s. In his rookie year alone, Quarry fought 19 times, gloving up in prizefight backwaters such as Hawaii, Orlando, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

By April 1972, only three years after turning pro, Quarry had amassed a record of 35-0. Although he scored a pair of solid wins over ex-title challengers Andy Kendall and Jimmy Dupree, he was barely above the club fight level. He was talented, but his shortage of power was glaring, and, at 21, he lacked seasoning, even with nearly 40 fights under his belt. None of that seemed to bother Quarry, who could not check his cockiness. "You might say I have two goals," he said before the fight, "to win the world's light heavyweight championship and become another Billy Conn, known the world over as not just a boxer but a celebrity."

Quarry took this confidence into the ring with him when he faced Bob Foster, who had been light heavyweight champion since 1968. Tall and lanky, with a receding hairline, Foster hardly resembled a physical marvel. But he possessed one of the most devastating weapons in boxing: a thunderous hook that left more than one world-class fighter counting atoms on his back as the ring lights fluttered and flashed above him. This included sturdy Dick Tiger, from whom Foster won the light heavyweight title. When Foster dropped Tiger for the full count with a cracking hook, the crowd gathered at Madison Square Garden dreaded the possibility of a ring fatality.

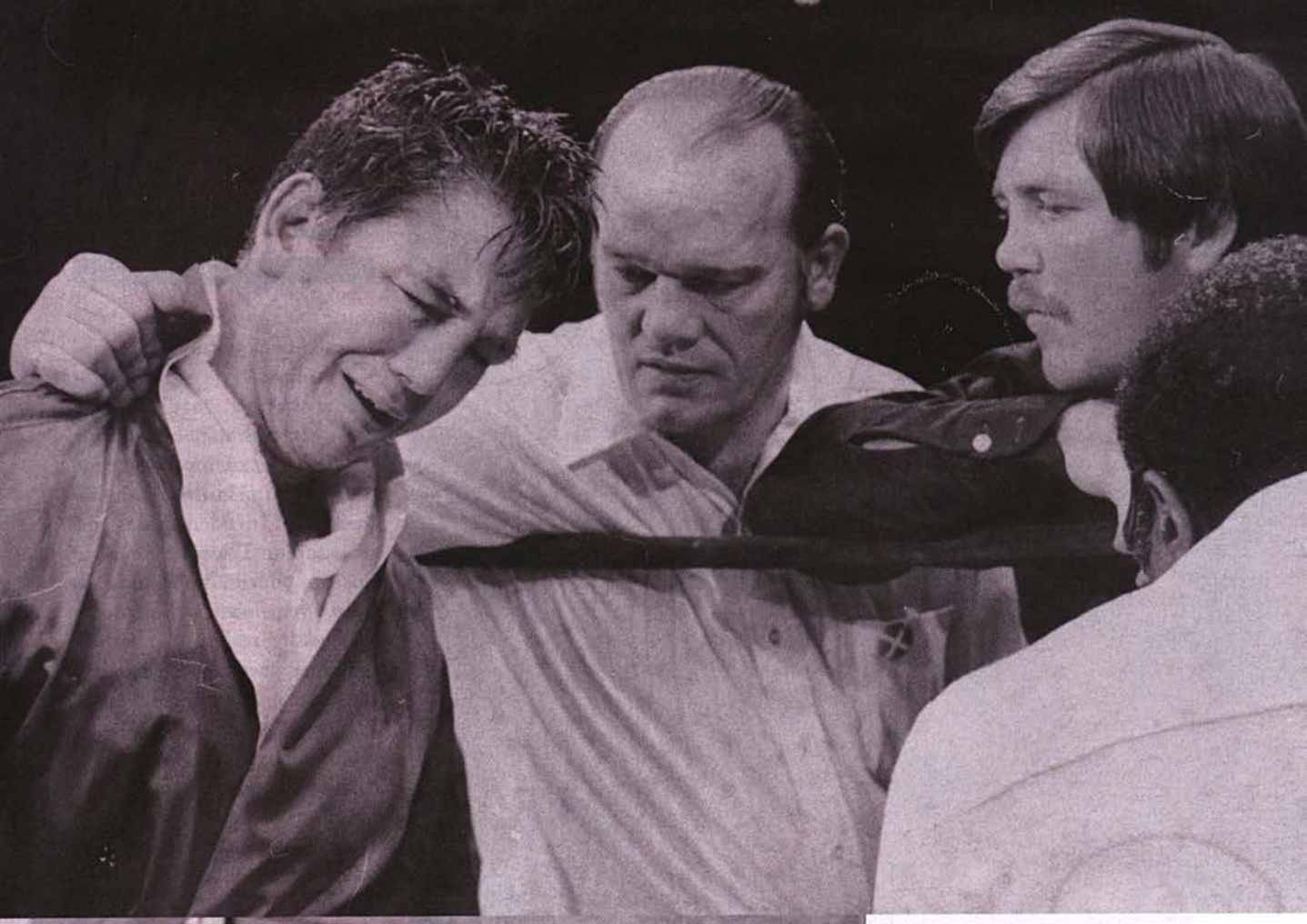
Success at light heavyweight, however, was a limited blessing. There was little money in the division, which was why Foster repeatedly challenged heavyweights – and suffered for his temerity. Over the years, Foster had been stopped by Doug Jones, Ernie Terrell, Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali. At 175 pounds, however, Foster was virtually indestructible. At 34 years old, Foster may have been on the downside, but that fact hardly mattered: Quarry never had a chance.

Foster and Quarry met on the undercard of Muhammad Ali-Jerry Quarry II at the Las Vegas Convention Center. It was a sign of just how delusional Quarry was when he broke into a version of the "Ali Shuffle" in the first round. A classic boxer who circled the ring on nimble feet and worked behind his jab, Quarry wisely moved to his left – away from the danger zone. To move right meant possibly getting caught by the same hook that nearly annihilated Dick Tiger, Mark Tessman and others. For three rounds, Foster stalked, landing occasional rights and a thudding jab, while Quarry tried to avoid incoming artillery. In the fourth round, Quarry began to stand and trade with Foster, a suicidal gaffe. During an exchange, both fighters missed simultaneous rights, and, like images in a funhouse mirror, they prepared to launch hooks synchronously. When Foster landed his left, it was on target – to the jaw – and explosive. No man could sustain such a blow without collapsing. Quarry, whiplashed, suffered a secondary impact when his head crashed against the canvas with an audible thud.

He was out cold for several minutes while a subdued Foster, worried about what his peculiar talent had done, milled in his corner. Finally, Quarry was revived and helped, gingerly, to his stool, where a television reporter stuck a microphone in his face and asked a few questions. Quarry, who managed to mumble a few distant words, would later confess that he had no recollection of the fight that had left him laid out on his back like a patient etherized on a table. "I don't remember Foster's punch," he would say. "I just remember waking up in the dressing room. Oh, I know I was interviewed in the ring after the fight. So I've been told. But I don't remember any of it. I was unconscious when I was doing that interview. I had to be."

For his first and last title shot, Quarry, just 21, earned $40,000. After losing to Foster, Quarry slipped into journeyman status, alternating wins and losses with a frequency that eventually forced him out of the light heavyweight ratings. There was no recovering from what Foster did to him. "I kept fighting," Quarry told Boxing Illustrated, "but never really got back to what I was capable of producing."

The travels of a knockaround boxer in the mid-1970s were hardly the equivalent of an American Grand Tour. Dreary, seamy, thorny – it was a grinding trade in more ways than one. Television had all but abandoned boxing (the heavyweight division was an exception) and substantial paydays were scarce. To make extra money, Quarry began dabbling in, of all things, karate. In 1975, when Bruce Lee and martial arts were growing fads, roughly 800 spectators gathered to watch "Karate Masters versus Boxing Professionals" in Houston, Texas. The main event featured Quarry against "Master" Yong Tae Lee, Korean National Taekwondo Champion and proprietor of a karate



(Above) Quarry sheds tears after a 1977 loss to Mike Rossman. (Below) Bob Foster.

school in Los Angeles. "I think full-contact karate might become a moneymaking sport in a couple of years," Quarry said, "and if that happens, I want to be prepared. I feel I have an edge with my boxing background. Right now, boxing is my livelihood. But I train in both sports every day." His martial arts debut was a debacle when Lee, being worked over by Quarry against the ropes, forgot the rules of engagement and headbutted Quarry out of the ring. It was a move that might have made Bobo Brazil proud, but it earned Lee an immediate disqualification.

Quarry went on to become a moderate attraction in Florida and made a fair living headlining nondescript cards at the Orlando Sports Stadium promoted by Pete Ashlock. After all, even in his fighting

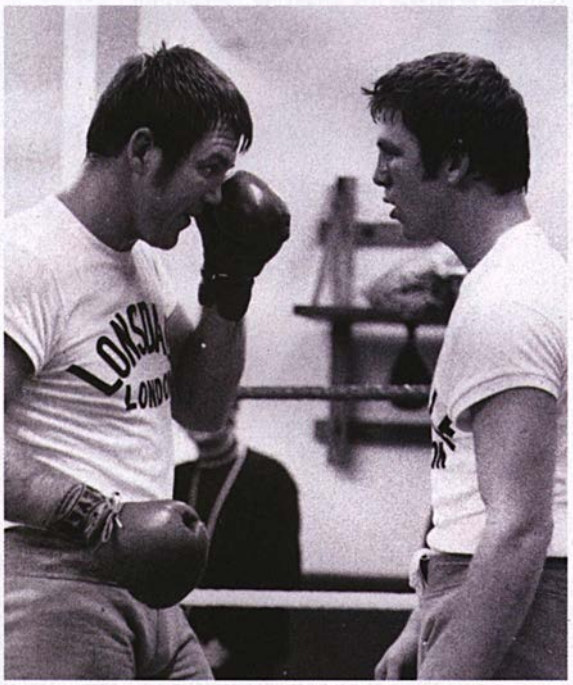
dotage, at the age of 24 or 25, Quarry retained name recognition – even if it was only secondhand. He was also still capable of scoring the occasional upset. On September 30, 1975, Quarry outpointed streaking light heavyweight Mike Rossman over 10 rounds in Madison Square Garden. But the losses, and the scar tissue, soon began to mount. Two more fights against Rossman ended in defeat for Quarry – including a stoppage due to a gruesome cut above his eye that required multiple stitches. Now Quarry began having trouble reaching the final bell. Over the last 10 bouts of his career, Quarry went 3-5-2, with four of his losses by knockout.

Like most fighters who cannot break away from a pursuit ingrained in them from the time they were children, Quarry continued fighting long after his peak. He seemed almost out of place at the dawn of the glitzy 1980s, his handsome features now permanently misshapen, and his eyes, beneath the scarred brows, now developing a faraway gaze.

When Quarry retired in 1982, after dropping a decision to a complete unknown in Crystal City, Virginia, he did so with resentment at the sport that had promised so much. "If I had to do it all over again," he told Boxing Scene in 1986, "I'll tell you one thing, there's no way I'd ever be a fighter. No way. It's a bad business. The professional boxer is abused. He's in the hands of the promoters. Boxing should be outlawed."

Before long, Quarry began behaving erratically. He lingered outside of bars and strip clubs, under the shimmering moonlight, and goaded unsuspecting drunks into fisticuffs. Depressed and struggling to make a living, Quarry was nearing bottom and turned to drugs. "I did cocaine every day for three years," Quarry said in 1986. "It wasn't until I went back east, where I didn't know where to get it, that I finally got off of it."

Abandoning drugs, however, failed to reverse his decline. What followed was that all-too-familiar downward spiral, the fate so common to fighters, from the least-talented journeyman to the elite Hall of Famer. He divorced. He squandered his life savings. It was nearly impossible to keep a job. Over the years, Quarry tried his hand at plumbing and hairstyling. He earned a certificate as a physical trainer. He worked as a janitor and an insurance salesman. A gym he ran with his brother, Jerry, failed within weeks of opening.



A prime Mike Quarry chats with brother Jerry after a 1971 sparring session.

By the mid-1990s, just when his brother Jerry was making headlines battling brain damage, Quarry was struggling with his memory, his motor skills and his speech. Then came the sad new childhood. In his 40s, Mike Quarry was now a man who had to be bathed, fed and clothed. He would wander off like a preschooler in a supermarket. At times, he woke up screaming in the middle of the night to punch holes into his bedroom walls, to weep uncontrollably. For Quarry, it was life as a non sequitur. The past, the present, even the future combined and recombined, mixed and matched, randomly, haphazardly, like the cut-up method of William S. Burroughs. And those occasional lucid moments? They let Quarry make cameo appearances in the world before, finally, not even a flicker of recognition remained. "Life is lived forwards, and learned backwards," Quarry would say, perhaps to some of the strangers he stopped in the street for a rambling conversation.

Before his career began its tailspin, Quarry was open about his ambitions. He was going to be an actor or an entertainer, with a standup routine of some sort. (Incredibly, one of his skits was an impersonation of a punch-drunk fighter, in the vein of "Slapsie" Maxie Rosenbloom and Rocky Graziano.) Instead, he became, at one point or another, a patchwork of the two most important figures in his life: his father, Jack, and his brother Jerry. Like Jerry, he became a fighter, and as a professional journeyman he replicated the nomadic tendencies of Jack. Then, when he retired, Mike Quarry became a street ruffian, mirroring the days when Jack brawled, bare-knuckled, across the dusty West. A few years later, Mike Quarry was a man unfit for even the most menial job, superficially resembling a young Jack at his most antisocial. Finally, he suffered from the same harrowing disease as Jerry: pugilistic dementia.

Mike Quarry died on June 11, 2006. He was 55 years old.

Carlos Acevedo is the editor of Hannibal Boxing. This article has been adapted from his book Sporting Blood: Tales from the Dark Side of Boxing, to be released on March 31 by Hamilcar Publications.

By boxing in an eight-round bout on February 8, Charles Conwell took the first step in resuming his career following the tragic death of Patrick Day.

DEALING WITH DEATH

THE COURAGE AND COMPASSION OF **CHARLES CONWELL**

By **Joseph Santoliquito**

Hammond, Indiana, was a good place for a fresh beginning. Charles Conwell had never heard of the town just outside of Chicago before, never knew the small venue he was in existed. Yet here he was, back in the ring, back home, his mind once again consumed with evading punches, looking for openings to punch and keeping his focus on the man in front of him.

For once, he was free of guilt, free of second-guessing, free of that throbbing inner pain that paralyzed him for months.

Because prior to that, the only things moving were his eyelids. That's what Charles Conwell was reduced to. Lying there numb, eyes blinking at a dark ceiling, no emotional GPS to guide him. Sleep came in two-hour chunks, if that.

Then his eyes would flutter open, his mind occupied by something he couldn't fix.

It was the guilty pangs that haunted him, gnawed at him until exhaustion, his welcome friend, brought another brief escape. Should he have thrown that right to the head in the fourth? Should he have thrown that right to the head with eight seconds left in the eighth? Should he have thrown more body shots instead of head shots? Should he have thrown the two rights and the left hook in the 10th?

His hands had listened well that night. Too well.

Conwell slept with death. He drove death around in his car. He sat with death at dinner, and on the edge of his mother's living room sofa, head in his hands, tears streaming down his face, trying to make sense of why this happened.

Early Wednesday afternoon on October 16, 2019, Charles Conwell, the 22-year-old 2016 U.S. Olympian and undefeated professional junior middleweight, had received the best news of his life – he was going to be a father. A few hours later, he received the worst – Patrick Day, a gutsy, full-of-life fighter from Freeport, New York, had died four days after Conwell knocked him out at 1:46 of the 10th round of a give-and-take battle.

Conwell (12-0, 9 knockouts) embarked on his journey back from the tragic fight against Day, which happened on the Aleksandr Usyk-Chazz Witherspoon undercard in Chicago, when Ramses Agaton (22-12-3, 12 KOs) did not answer the fifth-round bell of a scheduled eight-rounder at the Civic Center in Hammond on February 8.

Embossed across the front of Conwell's trunks was "Pat Day all day."

"It was good. It felt good getting back to doing what I've always done," Conwell said. "I wanted to show everyone that I was still the same as I was before. I didn't hold back. I was back to normal. The most important thing was getting back into the routine of what I normally do before a fight.

"I needed to do that. That was definitely something I wanted to do – get back to the 'old me.' I was so focused on the fight that I didn't think about anything else. I did hear from Joe Higgins, Pat's trainer, who told me I have a guardian angel looking down on me. I went in to win and not hold back."

Basically, everything Patrick Day would have wanted Conwell to do.

"Pat wouldn't have wanted me to hold back," Conwell said. "(He'd want) for me to show that I was even better than I was before."

It was a nice first step. That's what it was intended to be. It's why promoter Lou DiBella went out of his way to make sure Conwell's first fight back was not held in a major market on a major platform.

It also creates more distance from

DYLAN BUELL

Conwell continues to wrestle with difficult memories, questions and regrets from the Day fight.

the hellish day Conwell received the news of Day's passing. It didn't come as a dead-of-night phone call. Conwell had concerns about Day's health. He was back home, in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, getting updates. Most were bad and getting worse. Still, Conwell hoped. He prayed. Then that Wednesday, when he got the call from his trainer, Otha Jones, the words were blunt and cutting. Each came like a stab to his conscience.

"He. Did. Not. Make. It."

Patrick Day was pronounced dead at the age of 27 at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago from brain injuries sustained in their fight.

Conwell has been trying to live with that news ever since. Minutes after Jones told him, Conwell's legs had buckled. He couldn't talk. He couldn't breathe. He sat and cried. Shaquona Pearsall, his girlfriend, tried consoling him. Conwell received an outpouring of support from thousands on social media – and hundreds of ignorant tweets blaming him, some even threatening him, for Day's death.

"How do you live with something like that?" Conwell asked.

Boxing is filled with many unconscionable jerk-offs. Charles Conwell is not one of them. He's the kind who sees an older woman struggle with her grocery bags and reaches over to help. He's the type who does the little things, like hold a door open for someone walking behind him.

David McWater, Conwell's manager, recounts how Conwell will ask about each fighter in McWater's stable and how they're doing. It's typical. McWater describes Conwell as the "strong, silent type, with great emotional maturity. Charles is someone who always cares about others."

Day's death closed Conwell off. He didn't want to speak to anyone. He didn't answer texts or calls. He got off social media. There was no TV, no radio, because he had heard it was all over the media. He spent a lot of time with his mother, Annette Steen-Conwell, with Pearsall, Jones and his father, Charles Conwell Sr. They would insulate him, help him heal, though Charles himself knew the real mending had to come from within.

First, the hurt had to go away.

That was the grueling part.

"After I heard the news, I would always wake up in the middle of the night and just stare at nothing, maybe look up at the ceiling, or at a door, and think of nothing," Charles recalled. "I stayed over at my mom's house a lot."

He remembers going there and falling into her comforting arms and they both wept.

"I relived that fight in my head a thousand times," Conwell said. "Should I have punched him here instead of there? Should I have tried more body shots? I know I can't change what happened. But I tried changing it a thousand times in my head, and then I'd wake up and I had to face this again.

"What helped me most are my family and friends. You really find out who genuinely cares about you when you go through something like this. My family and friends tried making me think about other things; they tried making me laugh and getting me back into my regular life. It took some time to get back into a routine."

Around mid-November, Conwell went back to the Soul City Boxing Gym. It's always been his sanctuary, the place where he could bar the outside world from entering and hone the craft he's enjoyed since he first put on a pair of boxing gloves. Sweating felt good. Hitting the heavy bag and the speedbag felt better.

The gym was the one place where he knows who he is – around people he could trust.

"I had to be around a positive environment, because I was killing myself going over the (Day fight) and what I could have done differently," Conwell said. "There's that feeling of blame. In my heart, I know I didn't kill (Patrick Day). I had strangers text me and reach out on social media urging me to keep my head up.

"I also remember the assholes, too. There were a lot of things they put out there on social media, like I should be in jail, calling me a murderer, threatening to kill me. One said, 'If Patrick doesn't make it, I'm going to find you!' That made me angry. These were people who didn't know me that were judging me. These weren't boxing people. Boxing people – a lot of people I know of but don't know – all had my back. That was good to see."

The day before Patrick Day died, Conwell tweeted the following:

Dear Patrick Day,

I never meant for this to happen to you. All I ever wanted to do was win. If I could take it all back I would no one deserves for this to happen to them.

I replay the fight over and over in my head thinking what if this never happened and why did it happen to you. I can't stop thinking about it myself I prayed for you so many times and shedded so many tears because I couldn't even imagine how my family and friends would feel. I see you everywhere I go and all I hear is wonderful things about you.

I thought about quitting boxing but I know that's not what you would want I know that you were a fighter at heart so I decided not to but to fight and win a world title because that's what you wanted and that's what I want so I'll use you as motivation every day and make sure I always leave it all in the ring every time. #ChampPatrickDay

With Compassion,
Charles Conwell.

There were two victims that suffered the night of Saturday, October 12, 2019, in the Wintrust Arena.

One tragically died, the other is trying to live with it.

Lou DiBella has seen and endured his share of tragedy. The Hall of Fame promoter's brother committed suicide. He lost four best friends, all before the age of 33, to shocking circumstances. And DiBella has viewed more than his share of tragic fights.

DiBella promoted Leavander Johnson, the former IBF lightweight titlist who faced Jesus Chavez in his first defense on September 17, 2005. Five days later, Johnson was pronounced dead from brain injuries sustained in the fight. DiBella was not as close to Johnson as he was Patrick Day.

It's why DiBella speaks openly about his admiration of Conwell's courage and compassion during this tumultuous time. He places Conwell

right up there in the talent pantheon with other 2016 Olympians like Shakur Stevenson and Teofimo Lopez.

DiBella was in a tough spot the night of the Conwell-Day fight. He happened to be the promoter for both fighters. DiBella had an ill feeling, by the way Day looked after the fight. It was beyond serious. Day's first CAT scan was not encouraging. DiBella knew within an hour after the fight that Day's chances of surviving were slim.

He was among a vigilant chorus that was constantly updating Conwell about Day's condition. He was also among those who implored Conwell not to shoulder the blame.

Conwell wanted to get back into the ring as fast as possible, because he thought it would be therapeutic. DiBella wanted Conwell to slow down and hold off.

Knowing the psychological and emotional trauma Conwell had endured, DiBella went out of his way to make sure the Conwell fight was in an obscure place. He even dipped into his own pocket to make it happen.

"I always liked Charles, but the way I've seen him handle this since October, I just can't say enough good things about the kid," DiBella said. "You see his heart and his caring about people, and it's so adult and so evolved. The kid was hurting. It hurt me to see him hurt. I wanted Charles to reflect and talk to as many people he trusts and cares about.

"He had to get himself right before he got back into the ring again. I wanted him to start small. I don't want any pressure on him. He's had enough being in the spotlight about this. I want to ease him into this first fight back. It's low-key for a reason. Charles is a very talented fighter who will have many big fights ahead."

Conwell wanted to attend Day's funeral services, though he opted not to because he felt his presence there would be a distraction from Day's moment. Plus, based on the amount of hate he was receiving from demented social media trolls, there was a fear one of them may have tried to do something harmful.

Patrick Day's family was asked to comment for this story, but they decided not to. Understandably, they've distanced themselves from boxing.

The only thing that could heal Conwell is time and getting back to an active routine.

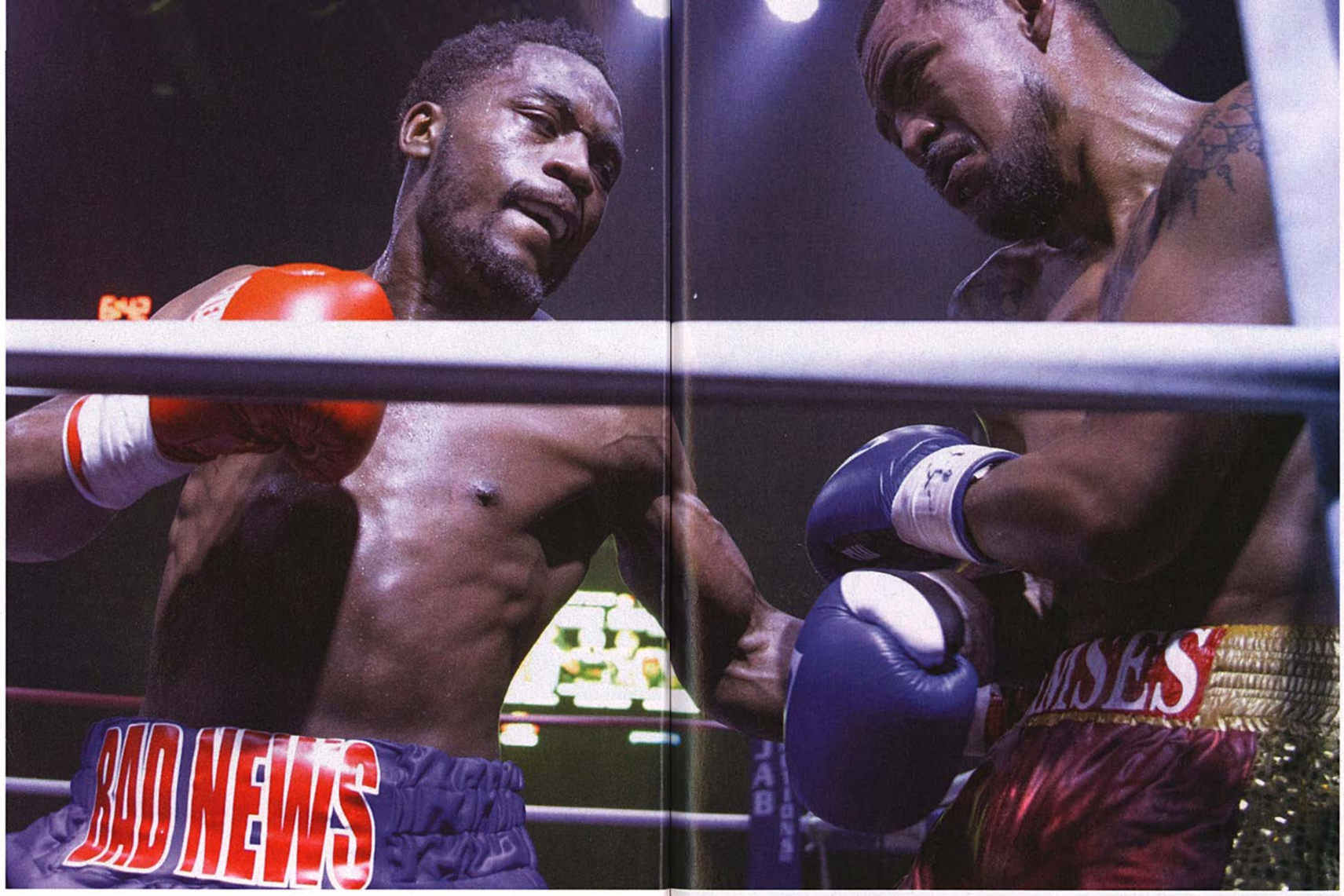
"Time will allow Charles to grow in the understanding that Pat was doing what he loved," DiBella said. "Charles already knows he's not responsible for Pat's death, though his hands did the damage that caused it. I don't think Charles will ever forget that night, and I don't think Charles will ever forget Pat Day.

"With the birth of his daughter, Charles will see the circle of life and he'll come to a greater peace through this. There have been deaths in the ring where someone was at fault. Leading up to a fight, you can have failure on the part of some person not doing their job, or some system, or testing, or whatever, when things were not done in the right way (and) there is culpability somewhere.

"With Pat's situation, I don't think there was culpability on the part of anybody. That night was a concurrence of terrible sequences in the final round that took a healthy, young athlete and gave him a life-ending injury. Sometimes, only God knows why.

"I believe Charles will be right again in the ring."

It remains to be seen.



JEFFERY FINNEY | CATCH N SHOOT MEDIA

Conwell didn't hold back on Ramses Agaton. He's convinced that Day wouldn't have wanted him to.

Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini was never the same after beating South Korean Duk Koo Kim, who died shortly after their fight in November 1982. The great Sugar Ray Robinson found it "very trying" to overcome the death of Jimmy Doyle, who died shortly after Robinson stopped him in the eighth round of Robinson's first welterweight title defense in June 1947.

Annette Steen-Conwell has a genuine concern for her son. She absorbed his tears. She was the rock he leaned on during the most traumatic times. She hovered over him like a mother does, going so far as to tell him to come to work with her. She didn't want him left alone.

She had her concerns prior to Charles' first fight back.

"Charles wrote the letter to Pat because he really wanted Patrick's parents to understand that he didn't mean or want that to happen," Annette said. "That helped him sleep a little bit. It took him months to get a full night sleep. It still bothers me to think about it, when I remember him questioning what he did in the ring that night.

"I hope he's OK, because I'm his mother and I'm real nervous about this fight. Will he hold back? Will he push forward? Will he fight the way he normally does? I hope so. I'm afraid about that. Charles is going to have a baby girl, and his life has already changed. It's going to change some more with his daughter coming.

"We spoke a lot over the phone, and I kept telling him that it's not his fault. Our family has suffered through this, and we think about Patrick Day every day. We can't stop and won't stop thinking about Patrick Day. We found a lot of cruelty out there. There were death threats. There were a lot of evil things said about and to Charles, but when you consider none of these people really know the kind of person my son is, it doesn't matter. It means nothing.

"I know my son. I know how strong he is. And we'll always be there to support him."

Against Agaton, Conwell was contained, calm, cool and loose. After Conwell won, DiBella, for one, was relieved. The promoter was looking to get Conwell back in the ring again against a higher-level opponent on Showtime in April.

"I think about Leavander Johnson and Pat Day almost every day, but I also think about Charles," DiBella said. "I never had the experience of promoting a young fighter with superstar potential like Charles and have this happen to him. I know Charles is ready to fight that main event on Showtime in April. Seeing Charles do well and seeing him return to his old self is gratifying."

When he's alone, Conwell will call up recent interviews of Patrick Day on the computer.

"I feel like he's talking to me," Conwell said. "Patrick Day would have wanted me to continue. Pat will always be with me. Winning a world championship is something he would want. So I'll fight in his memory. That's never going to change. I can't let him down. I fight for two now."

Joseph Santoliquito is a longtime contributor to The Ring Magazine/RingTV.com and is the president of the Boxing Writers Association of America.

DIVA FOR LIFE

THE CONTROVERSIAL LOSS OF HER TITLES HAS GIVEN **FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN** A VERY CLEAR PURPOSE IN HER BOXING CAREER

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

So, how's your 2020 going so far, Franchon Crews-Dezurn?

"It's been a little bit of a wild ride so far," laughs Crews-Dezurn a few weeks after she lost her WBC and WBO super middleweight titles to Mexico's Alejandra Jimenez on January 11.

That's the CliffsNotes version. The full story is that after Jimenez won a hard-fought decision over Crews-Dezurn in San Antonio, she tested positive for the banned substance stanozolol in a sample taken on the day before the fight. Jimenez denies any wrongdoing, claiming contamination of the sample, but her "B" sample tested positive as well.

Franchon Crews-Dezurn unified the WBC and WBO super middleweight titles last September but lost the belts to Alejandra Jimenez in January. She expects to get them back following Jimenez's positive PED test.

TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Crews-Dezurn's only pro loss was her debut vs. current undisputed middleweight champ Claressa Shields.

As a result, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation overturned Jimenez's win to a no-decision, but at press time, no ruling had been made on returning Crews-Dezurn's belts to her possession.

That leaves the 32-year-old from Baltimore in limbo as she processes the worst night of her professional boxing career.

"It's very traumatic, and I've been through a lot," she said. "I'm a very strong person and I'm very optimistic and I have the tendency to push my emotions aside because I try to be proactive and not reactive. But I was suspicious. Something was different and it wasn't a normal fight. I've been in the ring with men, I've been in there with women from the elite to the lower caliber of fighters, and it was definitely something different that I've never experienced. So when they finally did announce that she came up positive for a steroid, it crushed me. I'm still dealing with it."

It's not even the loss of the titles or the fight that hurts as much as the thought that a steroid user in baseball can hit the ball a little further, while one in boxing can kill someone. Crews-Dezurn was at the MGM National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Maryland, last summer when Maxim Dadashev suffered head injuries in his fight with Subriel Matias, resulting in the young Russian's death four days later. And Dadashev's fight was against a clean opponent. Crews-Dezurn's upbeat demeanor gets much more subdued when she thinks of what could have happened to her.

"I was ringside when one of the fighters died last year, and we lost a lot of people," she said. "So to know I could have lost my life ... to know that somebody did something that low, that classless, just for a belt, there was no honor or integrity. I could have died. I was fighting for my life, really."

Moments later, an attempt is made to lighten the mood, as Crews-Dezurn, who auditioned for American Idol in 2005, is asked if she should have stuck to singing.

"I should have stuck to something," she laughs. "Baking cookies, gardening, I don't know."

It's at moments like these when you know Crews-Dezurn will be just fine despite the mess of the Jimenez fight.

And truth be told, even though it wasn't her best night of a pro career that began in 2016, it was a close fight that many believed she deserved to win.

"From a boxing standpoint, I believe I pulled it out," she said. "I never felt like I lost the fight. It was a rough fight. I would have settled for a draw, but I never felt like I could have done more. And boxers know when they lose fights."

Not too many boxers take lemons and make lemonade like Crews-Dezurn has, though. Even before the final verdict was rendered in the ring in January, "The Heavy-Hitting Diva" was going viral when what can politely be described as a hair malfunction saw trainer Barry Hunter insist that Crews-Dezurn's wig be removed during the fight. Less than a week after the final bell, and following some social media sparring with Snoop Dogg, Crews-Dezurn had a shirt ready for shipment that simply read, "#FxCKTHATHAIR I Want The Belts."

It was a reminder that while there are a lot of great fighters out there, only a few have the charisma, backstory and business sense to be stars. And Crews-Dezurn (6-1, 2 KOs) certainly has that "It" factor, going all the way back to a stellar amateur run that landed her on Team USA.

"I've been in this position for most of my career because I helped grow women's boxing in the amateurs," she said. "Before Claressa (Shields) came, she'll tell you I was the first person she looked up to as an amateur boxer. So I've been in this position, and I took the chance and went pro with Claressa (Crews-Dezurn lost a decision to Shields in her pro debut), so that put me on my own platform too. And of course I know if I do good, we all do good. And I try to be supportive, because I know what it's like. A lot of women aren't making money, a lot of women don't know their business, so I advocate not only for women's boxing but to educate yourself as a fighter – male or female."

So once the dust settles with the Jimenez situation, does Crews-Dezurn want to see her in the ring again?

"The fighter in me, yeah. But as a person, I don't think she deserves it," she said. "And I love my life too much. I have a husband (Baltimore-based junior featherweight Glenn Dezurn) who cares about me that I need to be there for. And I don't trust her. Why should she be rewarded for cheating? As hard as hell that I had to work to even get in my position, no. She can fight somebody else."

Crews-Dezurn thinks about the work it took to get to the top of the boxing world, and she's not about to give up that spot for anyone, even though she did walk away from the sport briefly in 2017. What brought her back was the opportunity to get in position for a world title shot, and when she got it in September 2018 against Maricela Cornejo, she made the most of it, winning the vacant WBC crown. A year later, she met Cornejo again and added the WBO belt.

Now she wants both belts back. Not just for her, but for her mother, Sarah Marie Crews, who passed away less than a month after Crews-Dezurn lost to Shields.

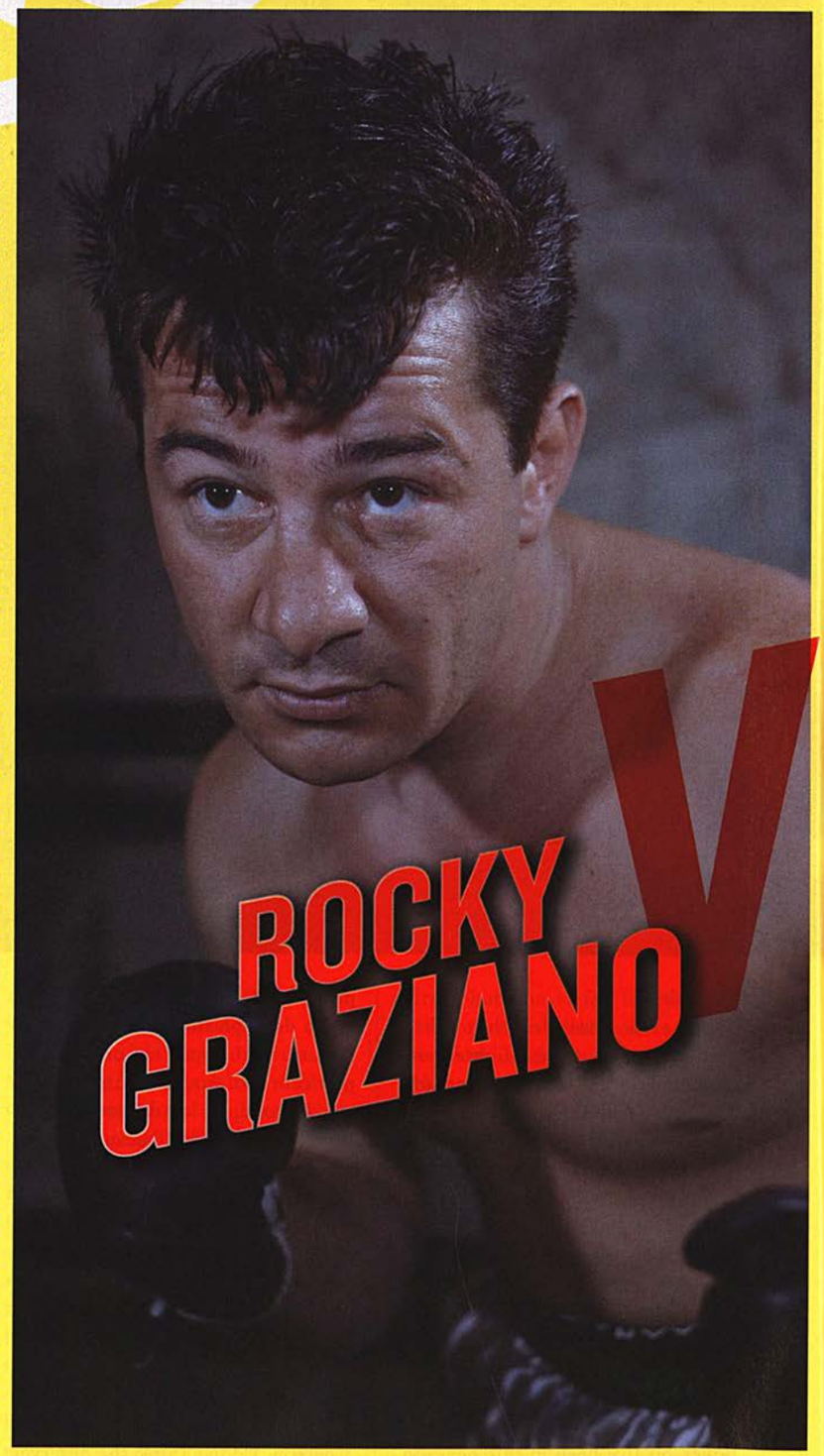
"She battled chronic kidney disease for 12 years, and I took care of her simultaneously with my amateur career, school and working three jobs," said Crews-Dezurn. "And she never complained, she never shed a tear. And even before her sickness, she took care of me. And when she died, one thing that always stuck to me is that I never knew her dream. People know my dream – I wanted to be a singer, a boxer, all these things. But I never knew her dream. And my older brother, we reconnected and he said her dream was to see us be OK. So I went through a lot, but everything I do, I gotta do it so her life wasn't in vain. And that really gets me through. I'm OK. I'm allowed to cry, I'm allowed to process, but it's not OK for me to give up."

MYTHICAL MATCHUPS:

By **Ron Lipton**

This is the first of an ongoing series by special guests, many of whom are not professional writers but are from other parts of the boxing world – boxers, sparring partners, trainers, matchmakers, referees, photographers, historians – each with unique knowledge and insight into the participants, each with his or her own style of presenting the dream bout.

Our first guest is Ron Lipton, best known as a veteran, world-class referee. However, Lipton, who was inducted into both the New Jersey and New York State boxing halls of fame, is also a former amateur boxer and boxing historian.



Rocky Graziano, a Hall of Fame-enshrined former middleweight champ, was the most celebrated slugger of the 1940s.

This is a dream fight that many longtime boxing fans have wanted to see receive the up-close-and-personal "mythical matchup" treatment. It was my honor to have done several "Battle of the Legends" features for The Ring Magazine in past decades, and I like to think that dream fights are my forte as a boxing historian. I enjoy doing them devoid of any personal feeling. This one was at the top of my list because it's a shootout between two great middleweight punchers, men known for their explosive ferocity.

Allow me some poetic license to create the fight atmosphere with an amalgam of eras and officials, and let's leave it on the Gillette Cavalcade of Sports.

I am going to sit ringside with you at the old Madison Square Garden at Eighth Avenue and 49th Street. I used to go with my longshoreman buddy Bill, who would meet me there for every fight card, never missing a show. The entire fight crowd was outside between Adam's Hats and Nedick's, milling around talking about the fight card. This main event is a sizzling match, alive with electric anticipation that is spreading through the fight crowd already.

Let's grab a hot dog and orangeade at Nedick's and get Malcolm "Flash" Gordon's "Tonight's Boxing Program" and an MSG program, too.

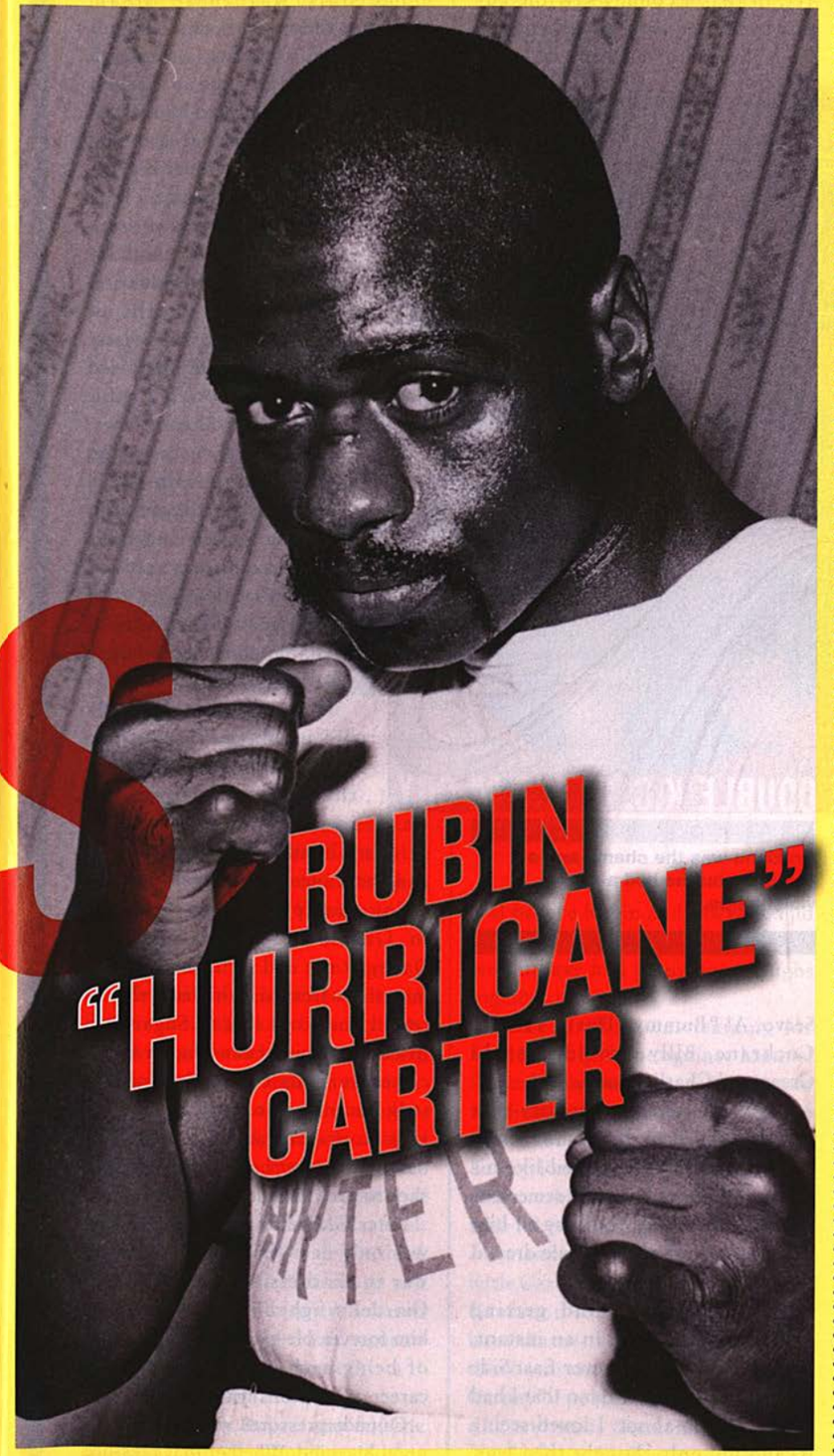
But before we go inside, let's take a look at the backgrounds of the main event fighters, much of which was touched upon in two hard-hitting movies, *Somebody Up There Likes Me* and *The Hurricane*. (I've read the books on Rocky and Rubin, and I am mentioned in the acknowledgments of Carter's book, *The Sixteenth Round*, as his sparring partner and a police officer who worked on his case.)

This isn't biographical background, it's personal insight I think is necessary to ascertain the outcome of their dream fight.

I was a paid sparring partner for Carter, so I know his capabilities, strengths and weaknesses better than most.

I also had the delightful experience of being Graziano's friend, having spent some quality time with him in my youth. I have studied every film that exists on Rocky and I sat ringside for all of Carter's major fights, missing only a few of his very early bouts.

Rubin – not "Rueben," as it is often misspelled – was a fistic force. He knocked out heavyweight



Rubin Carter was one of the most feared middleweight punchers of the 1960s. Could he beat "The Rock"?

sparring partners face-first while wearing specially made 23-ounce sparring gloves. That was the only way sparring partners could avoid being crippled or worse in that Detroit, "Kronk-like" gym war camp that he created. You took the punishment or you left without pay.

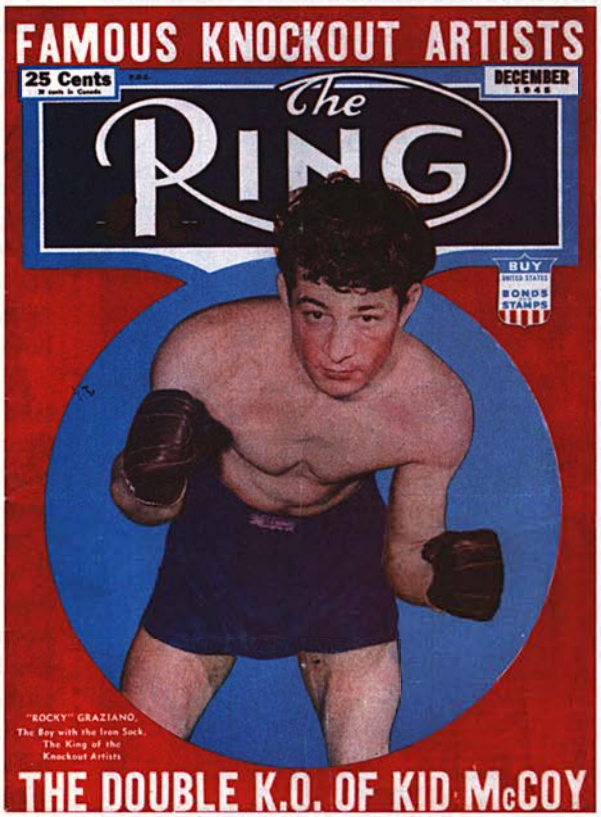
Having lived with and trained with Carter at Ehsan's (formally Madame Bey's) training camp in Chatham, New Jersey, Mooksie's gym in Newark, and in Paterson, New Jersey, I knew all about the power, speed, skill and viciousness Carter possessed, as well as his temperament and focus.

When in the presence of Rocky at the Concord Hotel in the Catskills, where I spent a lot of time in my youth, I witnessed the fiery side of the former middleweight champ's personality in the bar. For all his fan-friendly, amiable joking and warmth exuded when around the public and media, there was real menace from within when he was provoked.

In the midst of shaking hands with everyone at the Concord, some heavyset intoxicated man standing behind him kept annoying him at the bar. The idiot kept using his fingers to tap Rocky hard on the shoulder while trying to get him to turn around and listen to loud, disrespecting questions, such as "What did it feel like when Tony Zale knocked you out?"

It got to the point that people who knew the drunk were telling him to shut up and leave. Rocky, who was being friendly to all around him and standing next to me nursing a beer, turned his head toward the man and snapped, "Stop fucking touching me." The guy did it again, and I saw the blood rush into Graziano's neck and face. His whole body went tight and ready as he cocked his right hand.

His face was that of a snarling animal and, thankfully, the potential fight was broken up immediately by quick acting and concerned patrons. Yet, in that second, I saw the guy who hammered Zale into submission, the maniac who knocked out Marty Servo, Al "Bummy" Davis, Freddie Cochrane, Billy Arnold, Harold Green and Charlie Fusari.



Graziano was the champ and a celebrity, but he had a primal, violent side.

I saw the inherent ferocity that time had failed to diminish. Even in his sports jacket he looked like his namesake, a rock. I vividly remember standing there and thinking of him being pulled off of Tony Zale draped over the ropes.

It went way beyond getting angry. It showed me, in an instant, a throwback to the Lower East Side version of Rocky Graziano that I had read so much about. I loved seeing it, and my only thought then was, "Damn! THERE IT IS. No weapons, just bare hands like the old days." I have to factor in that aspect of him into this dream fight.

The only way these dream matchups should work in the minds of boxing aficionados is to match the fighters up on the best night they ever had while accessing their strengths and vulnerabilities under fire.

As a former fighter, I look for certain aspects of both fighters' records that are salient points of evaluation for me – the records of who they beat, how many knockdowns they suffered and how they acted after getting knocked down themselves when the going got rough. Additionally, I consider their fluctuation, if any, in weight and their fighting condition in most of their fights, along with the intense study of the films available on them and how they scored their KOs.

How many punches did it take to finish their opponent? How do I rate their arsenal of punches in terms of power, skill of delivery, hand speed, leg strength and endurance under fire?

For example, I cannot factor in Graziano's loss to Chuck Davey at the end of his career, five months after his chilling third-round knockout loss to Sugar Ray Robinson. Neither can I factor in the close decisions Carter dropped to stick-and-move boxers (Joey Archer, Luis Rodriguez and a few others) before and after he lost his lone title shot to Joey Giardello in 1964.

After Giardello, a dejected Carter was only in it for quick paydays. I was in his dressing room after the Giardello fight. That loss changed him forever. He gave up on his dream of being a champion, his boxing career and serious training.

Outside pressures weighed heavily upon his mind. Whether that pressure was his own fault or not, I saw that

the cumulative effect whittled him down from the destroyer he once was to an average fighter.

Others would not have given up their dreams, but I must note that Carter never quit in the midst of a fight or when trying to free himself from prison.

Graziano didn't give up after the rubber-match loss to Zale. He went on to score a series of knockouts, fighting his way back up the rankings to another title try vs. Robinson.

It should be noted again that Carter never quit to avoid punishment, even rising from three knockdowns against Dick Tiger, one of the strongest middleweight champions in history. No one ever counted 10 over Rubin Carter.

After Rubin's most devastating stoppage, the KO of Emile Griffith in Pittsburgh on December 20, 1963, Graziano said publicly and privately that he felt he could beat Carter.

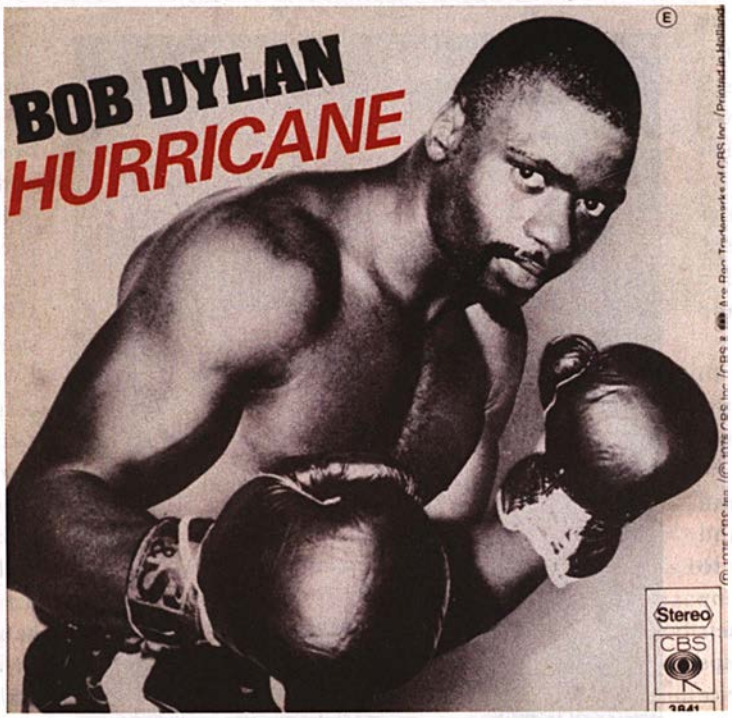
This colorful comment came up in conversation between Rubin and me one time in camp.

Carter told me, "I don't give a fuck, let him think what he wants. All fighters think they can beat anybody. He's wrong. No welterweight is going to beat me coming straight at me."

I said, "He's a middleweight, Rubin." He replied, "He was a tough fighter, but he was mostly a blown-up welterweight." I interjected that Graziano had a right hand that took out Zale. Rubin said, "The last thing I'll say is he had no left hand and you need two good hands to even dream of beating me, and I don't want to talk about this shit anymore."

So, that was that.

At that time, Rubin was not the charming fellow who changed his life around that Denzel Washington brought to life on the screen. Carter was always grouchy, but we were all used to his temper. Graziano's anger, from what I saw, was much more primitive.



Long before Bob Dylan chronicled his murder case, Carter was a menacing contender.

(I believe Rubin and Rocky would have gotten along later in life and would have had many good laughs together.)

Emile Griffith was training for his 1965 title bout against Manuel Gonzalez in the basement of the old Madison Square Garden. Graziano was there with Willie Pep and Barney Ross. I was also there and felt comfortable chatting with Graziano, who I'd gotten to know.

I mentioned I had been in camp with Carter and was surprised that Graziano's demeanor hardened immediately. I asked: "How do you think you come out in a fight with Carter?" I pointed up to Emile in the ring and said, "Remember, he took out Emile in the first round. No one ever did that."

His answer was short, to the point, and echoed a comment he made on Johnny Carson years later when asked if he was ever mad enough to hurt someone badly in the ring; he gave the same serious-as-a-winter-on-welfare response to me: "I'd split his fucking head with an axe." He said this as he made a tight fist and held up his dynamite right hand. I will never forget it.

OK, enough background, let's get to our seats.

THE FIGHT:

The Garden is packed. It is a sellout.

The marquee outside simply reads: Tonight Boxing Rocky Graziano v Rubin "Hurricane" Carter.

The equally famous gold and red fight posters note that it's "15 Rounds for the Middleweight Championship of the World, Rocky Graziano, Middleweight Champion of the World Vs. Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, the sensational knockout artist from Paterson, N.J."

Carter weighed in at 157 pounds, the same as he did when he took out Florentino Fernandez in one round. Graziano came in at 155, the same weight as when he took Zale down in six rounds.

There wasn't much trouble at the weigh-in, just an intense nose-to-nose staredown with neither man backing down.

Carter is slightly taller at 5-foot-8 to Rocky's 5-foot-7. Rubin tried that baleful stare he is known for; Rocky glared right back at him with his dark Italian eyes burning like two coals. The tempers flared. Neither man budged.

Both men are muscular beyond belief; Carter's arms, back, chest and shoulders are like a jungle cat.

Graziano is much more powerful in the legs, which look rock hard. He's got calves on him like Manny Pacquaio. Rocky's torso is ripped without an ounce of fat.

Whitey Bimstein, Al Silvani and Irving Cohen had to pull Rocky back after the face-off, as did Carter's cornermen Jimmy Wilde, Charlie Goldman and Pat Amato.

There were some problems with the choice of the referee, as both sides wanted a referee who would not stop the fight too soon.

The NYSAC agreed to have Ruby Goldstein as the referee despite protests from some sportswriters that he let the Robinson-Turpin fight go on too long and allowed Floyd Patterson to be dropped seven times by Ingemar Johansson in their first fight. Both fight camps agreed to the referee despite the Griffith-Benny Paret rubber-match tragedy.

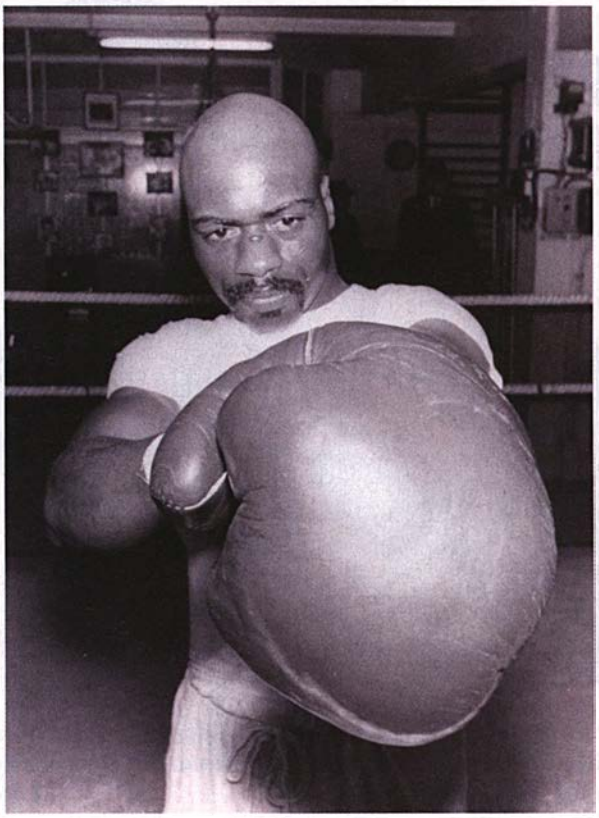
The judges are Tony Castellano, Harold Lederman and Steve Weisfeld.

Some of the sportswriters wrote about the rules meeting in which Carter's people told Goldstein to watch out for Graziano's fouls of choking with one glove while punching with the other and hitting after the bell. Carter interjected loud enough for all to hear, "I don't give a shit what he does. Let's get this over with."

The prelims were fantastic, but the crowd is starting to go crazy waiting for the ring entrances for the main event.

Here comes Carter; he has his black velvet hooded robe on with a gold sash and a big black panther's head on the back, made for him by his former manager's wife, Nicoletta Tedeschi, with another blue terrycloth robe under that. The terrycloth robe is to honor a teenage sparring partner Lou Duva sent to Carter who ended up crippled in a sparring session, Winnie Winfred.

Carter has his head down as he shadowboxes, throwing uppercuts and hooks, rhythmically jogging to the ring with the executioner-type hood hiding his face.



Carter wore special-made gloves to protect sparring partners from his vaunted power.

The crowd is going insane. I cannot hear the person next to me. A contagious electric current is in the air. The entire Garden crowd is standing up as one, and Carter keeps shadowboxing on the way to the ring. He is coming in to Nazareth's "Hair of the Dog," and the lyrics are blasting "Now you're messing with a son of a bitch." The crowd is going crazy. He is climbing through the ropes; Goldman is sitting on the lower strand and clearing the way for The Hurricane.

Carter is in the ring and he looks like a force of nature. He shakes the hood off to reveal the Fu Manchu mustache and goatee. The NYSAC let him keep it.

He takes both robes off and is glistening with sweat; he warmed up but good. His back muscles are like rippling pythons and his biceps are bursting through the skin. They say he never lifted weights but does thousands of pushups and situps.

Jesus Christ, listen to the crowd! The noise is deafening ... HERE COMES GRAZIANO. People are standing on their chairs, and I will have to stand on mine to see him. He has a white satin robe, no hood, and he is fast jogging, almost running eagerly to the ring. He looks as handsome as a movie star with thick black hair.

I hear some of the gamblers sitting next to me saying, "He's ready; he can't wait to get it on," and they are increasing their bets on Rocky. Bimstein and Silvani are trying to keep up with the Rock; Cohen is trailing behind. Graziano is coming in to Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York."

People are screaming Rocky's name next to me so loud it is beyond belief. This is the most exciting buildup to a fight I could imagine. Graziano slides through the ropes by himself. He's throwing punches hard and fast in his corner, warming up while the crowd goes wild.

Goldstein is checking the fighters' gloves, trunks, cups and mouthpieces now.

It goes to ring announcer Johnnie Addie. He is calling up the celebrities one by one. The wait is excruciating. Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Jake LaMotta. Marcel Cerdan is here from France. He and Jake give each other a hug, as did Louis and Marciano. Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney also enter and shake hands. Dick Tiger, Joey Archer and Emile Griffith are next.

The crowd is cheering Tony Zale as he enters the ring and goes over to wish Rocky luck, as all the champions did to both main event fighters.

Now for the participants. Carter is introduced: "On my left, in the blue corner, wearing the all black trunks, weighing in at 157 pounds, hailing from Paterson, New Jersey, with a record of..." I can't hear Addie; the crowd is too loud. "Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter!" The boos are now outweighing the cheers.

Addie continues: "To my right, in the red corner, wearing the purple trunks, weighing in at 155 pounds, the pride of the East Side of New York City, the middleweight champion of the world, Rocky Graziano!"

I see Frank Sinatra at ringside. Now the cheers of the crowd have shaken the walls of the Garden.

Goldstein is calling the fighters to the center of the ring with their chief seconds. Bimstein is rubbing Rocky's shoulders. Goldman is rubbing Carter's neck.

The boxers are not staring at each other. No bullshit hard looks. Both of their heads are down. All business now. They touch their eight-ounce gloves, which were agreed upon for this fight, and go back to their respective corners.

THERE'S THE BELL FOR THE FIRST ROUND:

Carter comes out with his hands high. He circles to his left to feel out Rocky and maybe counterpunch, but Graziano is on him already, winging punches and driving Carter back to the ropes. Rocky has Rubin pinned there and is raining punches on him,

Graziano's immense popularity was supported by a kill-or-be-killed style.

although none are getting through to Carter's head. They are all being blocked, but they are hard shots landing on his arms and shoulders

Carter tries to spin Rocky around, but Graziano is dug in with his powerful legs and keeps throwing both hands to the head. Carter has decided to work with him to the body and is rolling underneath the wide shots and digging punches of his own to the body. Graziano gets in one overhand right to the top of Carter's head and Rubin wobbles. The crowd just went berserk.

They clinch, and Goldstein breaks them.

Rocky is pursuing Carter, who is fighting for his life here. Rocky is swinging too wide, and Bimstein is yelling from the corner for him to get his hands up. Carter is still backing up. Graziano rushes in and Carter catches him with a short chopping right to the chin. Graziano is smashed down hard to the canvas, falling backward. The follow-up left hook misses and swishes through the air, but Rocky is down.

Carter runs to the farthest white neutral corner and is watching Graziano like a jaguar ready to pounce again. Rocky is up at the count of six and Goldstein waves it on.

The noise is almost too much to take now; people are going hoarse from screaming. Carter comes in for the finish and throws a flurry of punches. Graziano is not even clinching or taking one half step back; he is punching back furiously, and Carter backs off with a surprised look on his face as Rocky swings a right hand that lands on Carter's shoulders after the bell. The timekeeper keeps pounding the bell so everyone can hear it over the crowd.

Goldstein is yelling at Rocky and Carter's corner is protesting the after-the-bell punch. No points are taken.

They are in their corners. Carter's nose is bleeding. Goldman is yelling at him to take his time and keep his hands up.

Silvani is working on Rocky through the ropes and Bimstein is rubbing his face while talking to him. "What we worked on, damn it, what we worked on." Rocky looks OK now and is nodding back in agreement at Bimstein. There is the 10-second warning before the bell.

There's the Bell for the SECOND ROUND:

Carter comes out stalking and Graziano is on him like a madman, winging the right hand over the top, around the gloves, but not landing solid. People near me are screaming, "GET YOUR HANDS UP, ROCKY! KEEP YOUR HANDS UP!" The fighters are in the middle of the ring and Carter is trying to set up Rocky with a jab. Graziano comes forward

throwing more wild right hands, brushing Rubin's jab aside while carelessly moving in. Carter catches Rocky with a vicious left hook on the side of his head, almost turning Graziano's body halfway around as the force of it drops him.

The referee's count reaches "four" and Graziano is up but wobbly. People are screaming for Goldstein to stop the fight, but Ruby ignores them, wipes Graziano's gloves and waves in Carter. Rocky has blood and vengeance in his eyes and goes all out to attack Carter despite being hurt badly.

Carter is blocking the wide, looping right hands, catching them with his left glove held high. He is smiling through his mouthpiece. He smells blood like a wolf now. Graziano pushes Carter back to the ropes, still winging shots. He grabs Carter by the throat with his left hand to blast him with his vaunted right and Goldstein moves in and breaks them, giving Graziano a hard warning.

Rocky brushes the ref's arm aside, and Goldstein allows it in the heat of battle. Rocky resumes the wild attack. Carter smiles as he blocks the punches. Rocky weaves under Carter's own counter-right hand and comes back with the hardest left hook he ever threw. That must be what Bimstein was working on. Carter, watching only for the right hand, fell into the trap. He is wobbled badly and Graziano is on him like a maniac with his ass on fire.

One killer, full-force right hand gets through an opening and lands to the top of Carter's head. He is stunned and sags back onto the lower strand of the ropes, sinking into a half squat. The ropes saved him from going down, but a knockdown was not called. It should have been.

Now we can see Rocky's face better as his head is up on the attack. It's badly bruised from Carter's punches and he has a bloody nose, so he is snorting, breathing heavily. But he remains in his frenzy to keep punching Carter. One right hand has Carter sinking to his knee. WHERE THE HELL IS THE REFEREE?

Goldstein is at a bad angle and cannot see the full onslaught taking place. Rocky hammers Carter with all the power he can fetch up from the floor into that dynamite-charged right hand. It lands again and again with no lefts, as Carter is helpless in his half squat, unable to rise. Both gloves are drooping down as one more vicious right hand sends Carter's mouthpiece flying into the second row. Carter sinks to his knees on the canvas just as the bell rings. The count continues as Carter fully slumps to the floor onto his right side and into 5,000 photos.

People are screaming at the referee to stop counting as the doctors are trying to get up on the ring apron and into the ring. It is bedlam in the Garden. Ruby ignores them all as security prevents anyone from entering

Graziano's legend was forged on his savage middleweight trilogy with Tony Zale.

the ring. Goldstein finishes the count, "8, 9, 10... OUT!"

Dr. Vincent Nardiello and Dr. Nitin Sethi now rush into the ring to administer to Carter. After a full two minutes, they get him up and onto his ring stool.

Silvani has picked up the battered Graziano and put him on his shoulders, parading him around the ring to the adoring and cheering crowd while Bimstein and Cohen each hold a Graziano leg, brimming with victory smiles.

You can hear Bimstein yelling to

Carter fought four Hall of Famers: Emile Griffith, Luis Rodriguez, Joey Giardello and Dick Tiger (pictured)

Rocky above the noise, "THE LEFT HOOK, ROCKY! I TOLD YOU! I TOLD YOU!" Rocky is kissing his handlers and hugging them. He goes over to Carter, who is up now. They hug and Carter holds Rocky's hand aloft.

Addie puts the cherry on the ice cream. "THE WINNER BY KNOCKOUT AT THREE MINUTES OF THE SECOND ROUND AND STILL THE MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD, THE PRIDE OF THE EAST SIDE OF NEW YORK, ROCKY GRAZIANO!"

Don Dunphy has Rocky in the ring now. "Rocky, congratulations. That was easily one of the most exciting fights I ever saw. That is right up there with the Zale fights."

Rocky: "Thanks, Don, I want to thank my team for believing in me. I love you, Norma, and I'm fine. I knew I could take this guy if I got into the best shape of my life. He hits like a ton of bricks. Whitey had a plan, and I had to stick with it. Everyone thought I had no left hook, so we've been working on that in secret all through camp. I nailed him with the hook and the right hands finished the job on him."

Dunphy: "Rocky, he dropped you twice. How bad were you hurt each time?"

Rocky: "Twice? I only remember one time."

Dunphy: "Rocky, you were down twice."

Rocky: "Like I said, Don, he hits like a ton of bricks falling on you."

Dunphy: "I wanted to get Rubin over here, but he's back in the dressing room being checked out by the doctors. Hopefully we will see him at the post-fight press conference.

"Wait a minute, we have Randy Gordon from SiriusXM Radio in Carter's dressing room. Randy, have you spoken with Carter?"

Gordon: "I have Rubin Carter here with me and he is fine and willing to comment on the fight. Rubin, any comments on the great fight we just saw with you and Rocky?

Carter: "No excuses, Randy. Rocky was the better man tonight, and I congratulate him. I do want a rematch, and I know the next time I will knock him out. That's a promise. I had him down twice and I let him off the hook. And speaking of hooks, he did surprise me. I did not think he had a left hand. I found out the hard way I was wrong. I'll be back."

Gordon: "Thank you, Rubin. Best of luck. Back to you, Don."

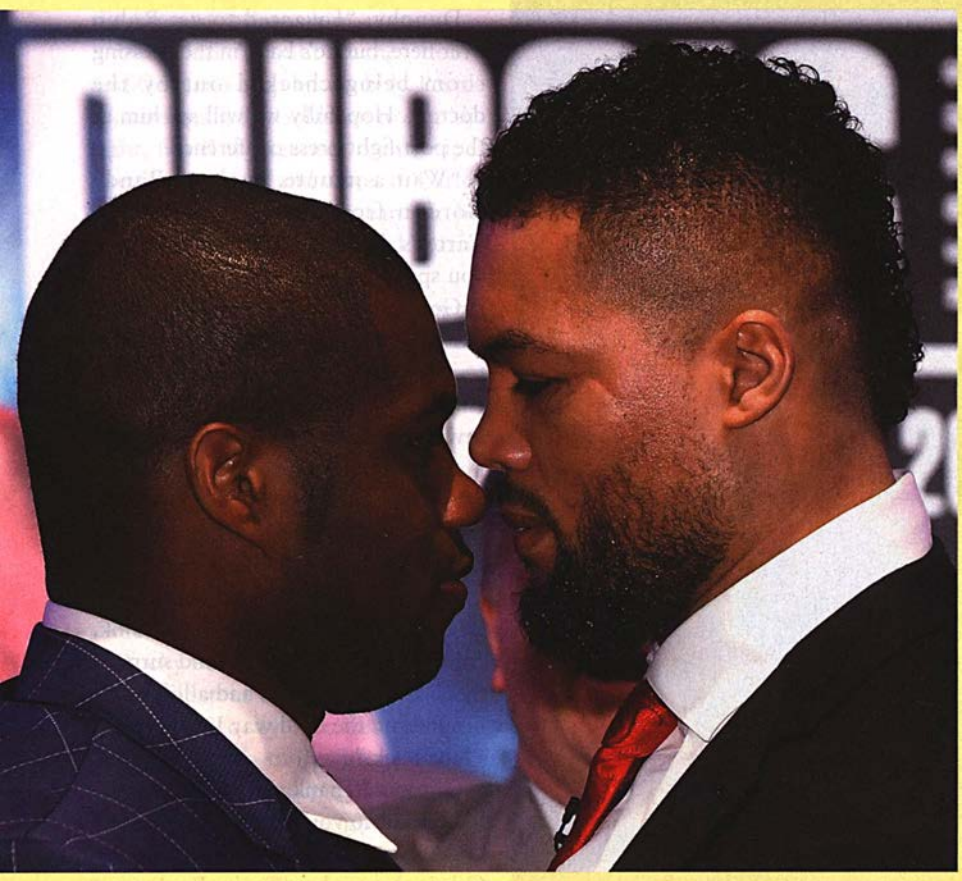
Dunphy: "I'm trying to get Rocky Graziano over here again. Rocky, can you get Whitey Bimstein over here please? ... Whitey, Rocky said you guys were working on his left hook for tonight, and that certainly was a surprise that did the trick. What's your take on the whole fight?"

Bimstein: "I have only one thing to say, Don, and that is from the moment I first met Rocky, I knew this kid had no quit in him. That is what makes a champion. Jack Dempsey said it best: A champion is a guy who gets up when he can't get up. What won this fight is that gift that Rocky always had. There was never any quit in him, and he showed it once again tonight."

Dunphy: "Rocky, any final thoughts?"

Rocky: "Yeah, Don. To everyone out there, never quit in that ring or in life. Somebody up there does like you."

WORLD BEAT



Daniel Dubois (left) and Joe Joyce have added their rivalry to the booming British heavyweight scene.

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

What a time to be a British heavyweight, given that two U.K. fighters between them hold the Ring championship and all four recognized world titles. No wonder the next generation coming up is reveling in it and is looking to climb the ladder with alacrity. Enter center stage Daniel Dubois and Joe Joyce. The promoter Frank Warren had to step in to separate Dubois and Joyce during their face-off when the highly anticipated showdown between Britain's undefeated heavyweights – the young knockout artist Dubois and Olympic super heavyweight silver medalist Joyce – was confirmed. The pair will meet at the O2 Arena in London on April 11, and it promises to be a blockbuster promotion that will garner global attention. Sparks flew when they came face to face as Joyce, 34, appeared to get under the skin of Dubois, 22, who shoved his rival.

For Dubois, it is the natural next step since turning professional in April 2017. He has won a number of regional and minor titles, earning a top-five WBO ranking, inside 41 rounds of action. Dubois said: "This is the biggest fight of my career without doubt. This will be the fight that announces me to the world. I am younger than him, faster than him, and I think I am better than Joe in every department. I have a better jab, I have better movement, I have more power. The only thing Joe has over me is experience, but he's never boxed anyone as young and as hungry as me. This will be the most devastating performance of my career."

Joyce, who won the Commonwealth title in his fourth professional fight, having made his debut in October 2017. He defeated former WBC titleholder Bermane Stiverne via a sixth-round TKO in February 2019. That was followed up with a fast win against the giant Alexander Ustinov in his first appearance as a Queensberry Promotions fighter last May.

Joyce said: "This is a massive fight. There's no denying that there's a lot on the line on both sides, but experience is something you can't buy, and I've got tons of it and I believe it'll play a huge factor in this fight." The contest ranks with the great all-British heavyweight fights going back to the 1960s, with Billy Walker's contests against Jack Bodell and Henry Cooper, the battle in the 1970s between Cooper and Joe Bugner and, more recently, Lennox Lewis against Frank Bruno and Derek Chisora against bitter rivals David Haye and Dillian Whyte.

"People always talk about wanting the best to fight the best early in their careers," said Warren. "We have the No. 1 and No. 2 best up-and-coming heavyweights in the world putting it all on the

line. It is a fight that needed to be made to see which man is ready to challenge the elite at the top end of the division. And the loser will have to reset and build again." Like the old days.

★★★

Kell Brook delivered a statement in Sheffield to reaffirm his desire to challenge for a world title again at 147 or 154. Having shed the 50-plus pounds he gained from 14 months out of the ring, 33-year-old Brook came back with a bang, scoring a seventh-round knockout of Mark DeLuca, a former U.S. Marine known as "Bazooka." It was a win he had to get – and ought to have gotten in the manner he did. DeLuca was game, a live opponent, but not on the level of the former IBF welterweight titleholder.

Kell Brook took care of an overmatched Mark DeLuca in seven rounds.

RICHARD HEATHCOTE

Brook was in confession mode before the fight, admitting that he had battled bouts of deep depression and mental health issues for two years, ballooning to 210 pounds. But he insisted after halting DeLuca with a brutal left hand – having felled him in the third round – that his appetite for the toughest challenges had returned. Indeed, in Las Vegas at the Wilder-Fury 2 event, Brook and Terence Crawford exchanged views. "Get on weight," Crawford told Brook, who says a welterweight fight with Bob Arum's fighter would motivate him highly. Pretty good fight.

Also on the Sheffield card that night, Kid Galahad wore down Claudio Marrero over seven punishing rounds to earn his place as a mandatory challenger for the IBF featherweight crown held by fellow Yorkshireman Josh Warrington. Marrero failed to show for the start of the eighth round after having his nose bloodied. Galahad suffered the only defeat of his 28-fight career against Warrington but is now set for a rematch, most likely this summer, if Warrington is able to unify his title with the WBO strap currently held by Shakur Stevenson.

★★★

Terri Harper claimed the WBC junior lightweight title in Sheffield in just her 10th professional contest, alternating aggressive attacks and smart defense to dethrone Eva Wahlstrom of Finland, one of women's boxing's most accomplished veterans. But it is not all glamour. Harper, just 23, worked in a Fish and Chip takeout restaurant for four years, and she even stacks shelves part-time for her fiancée, Jenna Hayden, a former soccer player who is a supermarket store manager in their hometown of Doncaster, Yorkshire. But now Harper has her own gym with manager and former boxer Stefy Bull.

Women's boxing continues to grow fast, to Harper's delight: "It's booming. There's a lot of girls turning over to the pro ranks and it's great to see. I'll do it for as long as possible. I love it. I live and breathe boxing. Jenna is telling me to chill out, but I need to be doing something. I love the gym, dieting – everything. As long as I can be in this sport, I'll be in it."

There is always the prospect, of course, of a fight up at 135 pounds against Katie Taylor, the unified lightweight champion. "To me, Katie is the Queen," Harper said. "In my opinion, she's the best out there. A few more learning fights for me first, build myself up, and then I will probably want to fight the best out there, and that's Katie." What a month for the U.K. Cheers.

Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph.

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

John Riel Casimero is not your typical Filipino fighter. While most are content to let their promoters pick their fights, he's never been shy about calling out opponents by name. He even called out Jerwin Ancajas years ago while sitting across the table from him at the Elorde Awards, a move that rankled a few of the old guard.

Casimero's willingness to speak up has earned him a major fight on his biggest stage to date, against Ring Magazine bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue on April 25 at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. The fight will unify Casimero's WBO 118-pound title with the IBF and WBA belts that Inoue is bringing out of the World Boxing Super Series.

In true Casimero fashion, the brash brawler held a press conference in Manila, alongside a cutout of the unbeaten Japanese star, under a banner that read "Monster Hunter."

"To everyone who thinks I am the underdog on April 25, I will shock the world and show the fans who the real 'Monster' is in the ring," said Casimero (29-4, 20 knockouts).

Casimero's career has largely flown under the radar in his native country, at least in part because most of his success has taken place abroad. He's fought in 10 different countries, with all three of his world title wins taking place in other countries.

John Riel Casimero isn't taking an underdog mentality into his showdown with Naoya Inoue.

His fights often take place during the early mornings, Philippine time, and TV stations rarely pick up the international feeds to his fights. That and his surprise losses, like a 2017 points loss to Jonas Sultan, and missteps on the scales have caused him to be overlooked, despite having won world titles in three weight classes and beating world-class fighters like Amnat Ruenroeng, Charlie Edwards and Zolani Tete along the way.

What are Casimero's chances of pulling the upset?

"I would say better than Nonito Donaire," said Sean Gibbons, the MP Promotions president and long-time Casimero associate. "I would say 50-50 or 60-40 for Casimero. The only thing Inoue does well is he can punch. Casimero is a shark. He smells a little blood, he's coming for you. He's gonna match this guy punch for punch."

How big would a Casimero win be in the history of Philippine boxing? In terms of achievement, it'd certainly be top five, up there with Pacquiao's 2003 beating of Marco Antonio Barrera and Pancho Villa's 1923 mauling of Jimmy Wilde to become flyweight champion. The smaller weight division limits the sort of impact a victory would have on the American public, but Inoue (19-0, 16 KOs) is highly regarded as a potential pound-for-pound champion, given his youth (he's five years younger than Casimero at 26) and willingness to take tough fights as he enters higher weight classes. A win for Casimero would almost certainly guarantee his spot in the Hall of Fame and plenty more headlining bouts in Vegas.

★★★

Pedro Taduran also knows a thing or two about fighting abroad. The IBF strawweight titleholder from Albay province held on to his belt after a technical draw against Daniel Valladares in Mexico. Two judges saw the bout 38-38, while the other had it 39-37 for Valladares, who sustained a serious cut over his right eye late in the first round from an accidental headbutt. Taduran (14-2-1, 11 KOs), who won the belt last September by stopping countryman Samuel Salva in four, says he'd be open to a rematch, either with Valladares or WBC titleholder Wanheng Menayothin, who outpointed Taduran in a 2018 fight in Thailand. Menayothin is expected to campaign in the U.S. after signing with Golden Boy Promotions.

"I'm gonna send a message to Golden Boy: We have a belt now; we'd love to unify," said Gibbons.

Gibbons says Taduran is expected to return to the ring for his second defense by May or the first week of June.

★★★

It wasn't formally announced by the press time, but Gibbons says Giemel Magramo (24-1, 20 KOs) of Paranaque City is expected to face Junto Nakatani for the WBO flyweight belt recently vacated by Kosei Tanaka. Magramo has won seven straight since his lone defeat to Muhammad Waseem in 2016, while Nakatani (20-0, 15 KOs) is coming off his biggest win to date, a sixth-round stoppage of Milan Melindo in October. The fight is expected to occur on April 4 in Nakatani's home country of Japan.

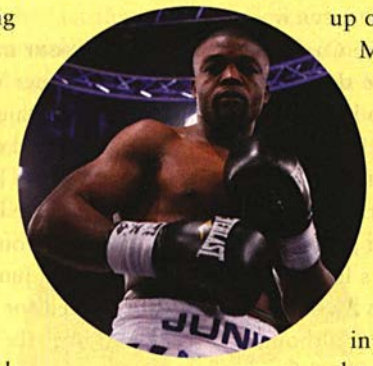
★★★

Mark Magsayo may not have been as active as he'd like to be since leaving ALA Promotions, but he's at least got his dream trainer. The unbeaten featherweight from Bohol dropped by the Wild Card

Boxing Club on January 28 and trained with Freddie Roach for a few days, working punch mitts for 4-6 rounds per session.

"It's surreal. It's just my dream before, to be trained by a legend," said Magsayo (20-0, 14 KOs). The 24-year-old fought twice in 2019 and is expecting to announce a new promotional deal shortly. He says he'll be returning to the Wild Card to train once he has a fight scheduled.

"I have been learning a lot, even the stuff I didn't think I could do inside the ring before," added Magsayo. "I'm also having a lot of fun while training, which is the best feeling for me."



Perennial contender Ilunga Makabu finally earned a world title.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

South Africa-based Congolese road warrior Ilunga Makabu won the vacant WBC cruiserweight title in front of his countrymen in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a hard-fought unanimous decision over undefeated Polish contender, Michal Cieslak, prevailing by scores of 114-112, 116-111 and 115-111. Makabu had failed in a previous attempt at the same title when Tony Bellew stopped him in three rounds back in 2016, but this time he would not be denied.

In a battle of southpaws, Cieslak started well. His side-to-side movement gave Makabu some trouble and he managed to find a home for his right hook to the head and body. After the third round inexplicably ended a minute early, Cieslak was boxing well on his toes in the fourth when Makabu, spurred on by chants of "Bomaye! Bomaye!" from the crowd, started pressing harder. He landed a left to the body and Cieslak suddenly turned and seemed to walk away when Makabu followed up with two looping lefts that deposited the Pole on his back. Cieslak got up on wobbly legs and Makabu poured it on, but somehow he could not find the shot to put Cieslak away. The bell came as a welcome relief for the Polish fighter.

Cieslak recovered in the fifth, finding a home for his straight left through the gloves of Makabu, who kept banging his opponent's midriff whenever he could close the gap. It was during one of those moments that Cieslak, with his back to the ropes, uncorked a left uppercut followed by a looping left to the top of Makabu's head. The combination had the local man stumbling backward, touching the canvas with his glove; referee Michael Griffin correctly scored a knockdown to even the tally at one apiece.

Cieslak continued to box in cruise control in the sixth but started looking decidedly uncomfortable when Makabu did manage to drive him to the ropes and unload. Makabu stunned Cieslak with a right hook-straight left combo in the seventh and drove him back to the ropes with a double jab, pouring on the pressure toward the end of the round. From then on, the momentum started shifting toward Makabu, who was clearly the harder puncher. Cieslak tried to keep himself in the fight, but he had the look of someone swimming against the tide.

Makabu simply kept coming, walking through whatever Cieslak threw while smashing in straight lefts and banging the body. A big right uppercut followed by a left hand in the 11th got the crowd excited, but Cieslak hung in there to hear the final bell.

Makabu, with his hard-punching, pressure-fighting style and leaky defense, is one of the most fan-friendly fighters out there. How long his title reign will last is an open question, but whatever happens, it won't be boring.

★★★

The Ring's No. 5-rated cruiserweight, Kevin Lerena, journeyed to Goeppingen, Germany, to take on former titleholder Firat Arslan – who is 49 years old, yes, but he was on a 13-0-1 streak since dropping an unpopular split decision to then-Ring champion Yoan Pablo Hernandez in 2014.

With both fighting from the southpaw stance, Lerena started the first round by boxing well behind his jab and throwing the occasional left to the body while Arslan stalked with his gloves held high. From the second, Lerena started turning up the heat, and the difference in speed was glaring. Lerena's straight lefts were landing in succession and had Arslan looking uncomfortable in the third.

Arslan tried his best, bulling his way in and landing two left uppercuts followed by a right hook in the fourth, which was his best round. It was not enough. Lerena peppered him with combinations in the fifth, and even though Arslan did land some short uppercuts on the inside, the South African was unperturbed, knocking the German back on his heels with a right hook-straight left combo.

The end came at 1:13 of the sixth when another hard left from Lerena caused Arslan's legs to do a dance. With Arslan backed into a corner, Lerena poured on the combinations, the towel came flying in and the referee called the fight off, giving Lerena the TKO victory. Arslan protested, but it was a lost cause.

If everything goes according to plan, Lerena will next face Ryad Merhy for a secondary WBA title.

With Kevin Lerena, WBC titleholder Makabu and a resurging Thabiso Mchunu, the African continent is making some noise in the cruiserweight division.

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

Ring Magazine bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue is about to take the next big step in his career. "The Monster" will return to the U.S. on April 25 and risk his IBF and WBA straps against WBO titleholder John Riel Casimero at Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas.

Naoya Inoue will face John Riel Casimero on April 25.

"I am excited about this triple-unification fight finally being set, and I cannot wait," Inoue said during the official announcement held on January 31 in Tokyo.

After being honored universally for overcoming "The Filipino Flash," Nonito Donaire, in the World Boxing Super Series final last November in Saitama and welcoming the arrival of a new baby girl during the holiday season, Inoue opened his first sparring session to the media at the end of January (as soon as he got a doctor's permission to resume contact following the facial fractures in two spots caused by Donaire's fists). Inoue missed the annual Japan Boxing Ceremony on February 7, where he was named Boxer of the Year, as he got a fever from muscle fatigue after the short camp in Guam. But it shows how intense the training camp was.

It seems like destiny for Inoue to fight Casimero. The Filipino captured the WBO belt from rangy southpaw Zolani Tete courtesy of a short right to the chin in the third round of their November bout. The 31-year-old three-division titleholder called out Inoue during his in-ring post-fight interview.

Inoue wanted to face Casimero for his first world title shot back in 2014, when Casimero held the IBF junior flyweight belt. However, the IBF would not allow the 20-year-old Japanese prospect mandatory challenger status with just six pro bouts. Six years later, Inoue finally gets his shot at Casimero, although he's evolved from young upstart to pound-for-pound-ranked superstar. Inoue added some insight on the veteran slugger during the Tokyo press conference:

"Casimero has a natural boldness and wildness, like most Filipinos. I have to be very careful not to get caught by the big punches. He has good strategy at the same time, not only the power. I won't make light of his great career with world titles in three divisions. I will cut his energy and courage, little by little."

The April 25 headliner, which will be televised on ESPN+, will be Inoue's second pro fight in America. His first U.S. appearance was on Tom Loeffler's "SuperFly" promotion at StubHub Center (currently Dignity Health Sports Park) in Carson, California, in 2017. This time the stakes, like his recognition, are much higher.

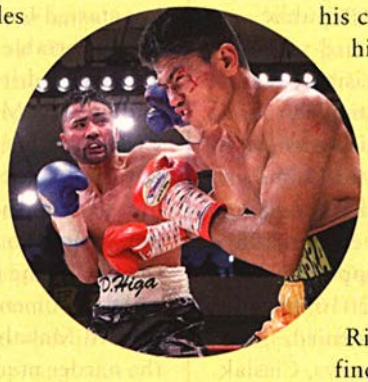
"I've always thought that Las Vegas is the center stage of boxing," Inoue said. "I'm honored to fight in the main event there. I'll put my boxing life on the line in this fight and shock the world."

★★★

After a year and 10 months hiatus, former WBC flyweight titleholder Daigo Higa (16-1, 16 KOs) returned to the ring. He stopped Jason Buenaobra (7-5-3, 3 KOs), of the Philippines, at 2:25 of the sixth round of a scheduled eight-round junior featherweight (contracted for 119 pounds, one pound over the bantamweight limit) contest on February 13 at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo.

Of course, the long vacation affected his movement in the early rounds, but Higa soon got into his bob-and-weave rhythm and saw how to get inside on the tall, mobile southpaw – by targeting the body. In the sixth round, Higa hurt the journeyman, who reportedly had never been knocked down, and dropped Buenaobra twice with right hands to the body, letting the referee know it was time to stop the fight.

Despite being cheered by a full-house crowd, Higa was brutally honest about his passion for his comeback during his in-ring post-fight interview:



Daigo Higa ended his 10-month layoff with a stoppage victory.

"The warm applause reached me in the fight. I appreciate it so much. But I cannot say I am full of motivation yet. Right now I cannot find the passion that I used to have to be a world champion that I had when I came up to Tokyo from Okinawa at the age of 18. So, my training is still on and off. I know going on like this is hopeless. I feel bad for my people's support. I'll

think it over again."

This was Higa's first fight back since losing to Cristofer Rosales by ninth-round TKO after giving up his WBC strap on the scale by not making weight. The young pressure fighter was exhausted from boiling down for his third defense, and his heart was broken by the fact that he was the first Japanese titleholder who failed to make weight for a world title bout. It took a long time for supporters to encourage him back to the ring, but still his heart isn't fully recovered.

"If my motivation won't come back, I will have to leave boxing," the former titleholder added.

It was for the first time in a while that the famous Korakuen Hall was fully packed. That's how much people love the Okinawa fighter, the only fighter to make it to a world title with all knockout victories in Japanese boxing history. He's special, so we will just sit and wait for the time when he regains his passion for the sport.

★★★

Sho Kimura made short work of Merlito Sabillo.

Former WBO flyweight titleholder Sho Kimura (19-3-2, 12 KOs) is totally aware of his next goal: "I will be back on the top of the world this year," he promised after knocking out former WBO strawweight beltholder Merlito Sabillo (27-8-1, 13 KOs) with a clean left hook to the temple at 2:16 in the second round of a scheduled 10-round flyweight contest on February 15 in Manila.

It had been two years and seven months since the 31-year-old Kimura shocked the world by stopping 2008 Olympic gold medalist Zou Shiming in the 11th round to snatch the WBO flyweight title from the Chinese hero. After he lost the title to Kosei Tanaka by majority decision in his third defense in September 2018, he failed to become a two-division titleholder after being outboxed by WBA 108-pound titleholder Carlos Canizales of Venezuela last May.

Outside the ring, Kimura had to find another stable to sustain his professional boxing license by the Japan Boxing Commission when his manager suspended his own business (in disgrace) after it was revealed that one of the trainers in his gym had been bullying clients for extra money (with his knowledge).

Still, Kimura remained ambitious. The victory over Zou brought Kimura great popularity in China. Surprisingly, instead of hostility for beating an Olympic legend, his background of being a boxer with blue-collar jobs just to make a living evoked sympathy from the Chinese working class. It is said that he is as well-known in China as Japanese table tennis star Ai Fukuhara is. The Max Power Promotion of Liu Gang, a premier businessman in China, has featured the Japanese warrior on occasion, including in his most recent fight against Sabillo, working with rising Filipino promoters for the first time. With connections like these, it won't be long before Kimura gets another opportunity to return to the throne.

CANADA

BY JAMIE REBNER

Unfortunately, the trend of losing esteemed Canadian trainers continues. In recent months, I've written about Abe Pervin and Kevin McDermott, who both contributed to the success of countless amateur

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and professional fighters. Now I have to add Ron Di Cecco to that list, who passed away suddenly from a heart attack in early February. Ron was very well-respected on the local scene, having trained Alex Hilton for more than a decade. Alex was a member of the well-known fighting Hilton family in Montreal; two of his brothers briefly held world titles, while he and his father were Canadian champions. After becoming disillusioned with the professional game, Ron decided to focus his efforts on training people from everyday walks of life. And I am grateful that he made that change, because without it, he would have never impacted my life the way he did.

I started boxing under Ron's tutelage as a gangly 17-year-old out of his small studio gym in Montreal, aptly named Big Ron's Fight Studio. Ron, also a fourth-degree black belt in karate, was the epitome of an old-school trainer. He taught every fundamental of the sport the right way, and he never sugarcoated anything. If you did something wrong, no matter how small, he would stop and correct you. And if you had to try 100 times before you got it right, Ron made sure that you did. He never let mistakes slide, because he knew it was much harder to unlearn a bad habit than to learn a good one from the beginning.

It was that meticulous approach that I valued so profoundly, because it allowed me to learn the sport properly. Before starting with Ron, I had no martial arts experience. But after years of training, I now have a rock-solid foundation of skills. If I ever decide to walk into any gym to hit a heavy bag, do some shadowboxing or spar, I know that I will be able to acquit myself well because of the skills that Ron ingrained in me.

But Ron provided way more than technical expertise. He was my mentor, and he helped develop my passion for the sport. After big fights, Ron and I would have lengthy conversations during which he would share his many thoughts about the technique and strategy that was on display. Having someone who matched my passion for boxing pushed me to study the sport even more. My love for boxing still grows today, and Ron's support during those early years played a significant part in that.

In addition to fostering my love for boxing, Ron taught me invaluable life skills that helped develop my character. By learning how to defend myself, my self-confidence increased dramatically. As a young man who lacked self-belief, that was huge. I stood taller and I felt proud of who I was because I boxed, and I thank Ron for that. He also taught me the importance of giving my all every time I walked through the gym doors, regardless of how stressed or tired I felt, because that effort would cause me to improve. And whenever I got frustrated because I couldn't execute a specific technique, Ron showed me how to relax, refocus and try again with a clear mind. Those skills that he passed on to me were even more crucial beyond the gym walls. I can honestly say that I am a better person today than I would have been had I never stepped foot inside Big Ron's Fight Studio. And that's the ultimate compliment I can give him.

★★★

I attended Eye of the Tiger Management's "Tiger's Den" card at the Montreal Casino on January 25, which featured some of the stable's top prospects. In the main event, Batyr "777" Jukembayev (18-0, 14 KOs) utterly dominated his late-replacement foe, Ricardo Lara (22-8, 10 KOs). The southpaw from Kazakhstan, who calls Montreal home, used his mighty left hand to brutalize Lara's head and body. Jukembayev scored two knockdowns in the second round, after which the referee wisely ended the contest. Batyr exited the ring with nary a scratch, which should allow him to make a quick ring return. He marches forward in hopes of a title shot in 2020, and he is definitely ready for one.

140-pound prospect Batyr Jukembayev is now 18-0.

On the undercard, several other noteworthy bouts took place. In an enticing all-Canadian showdown, Quebec favorite Clovis Drolet (11-1, 7 KOs) and prospect-killer Mponda Kalunga (8-2, 3 KOs) of Ontario, by way of Egypt, engaged in a dramatic and entertaining scrap worthy of the hype that preceded it. After two close rounds, Kalunga seized control in the third by scoring an emphatic knockdown that had Drolet hurt. Drolet's nightmare continued in the fourth as he was sent to the canvas once more by Kalunga's unorthodox yet effective shots. The remainder of the fight was hotly contested, with each fighter taking turns edging rounds. In the end, it was Kalunga who earned the split-decision victory. With the win, he has now taken the "0" from five fighters' records. That means that if you're a Canadian middleweight prospect looking to build your record, avoid Kalunga at all costs.

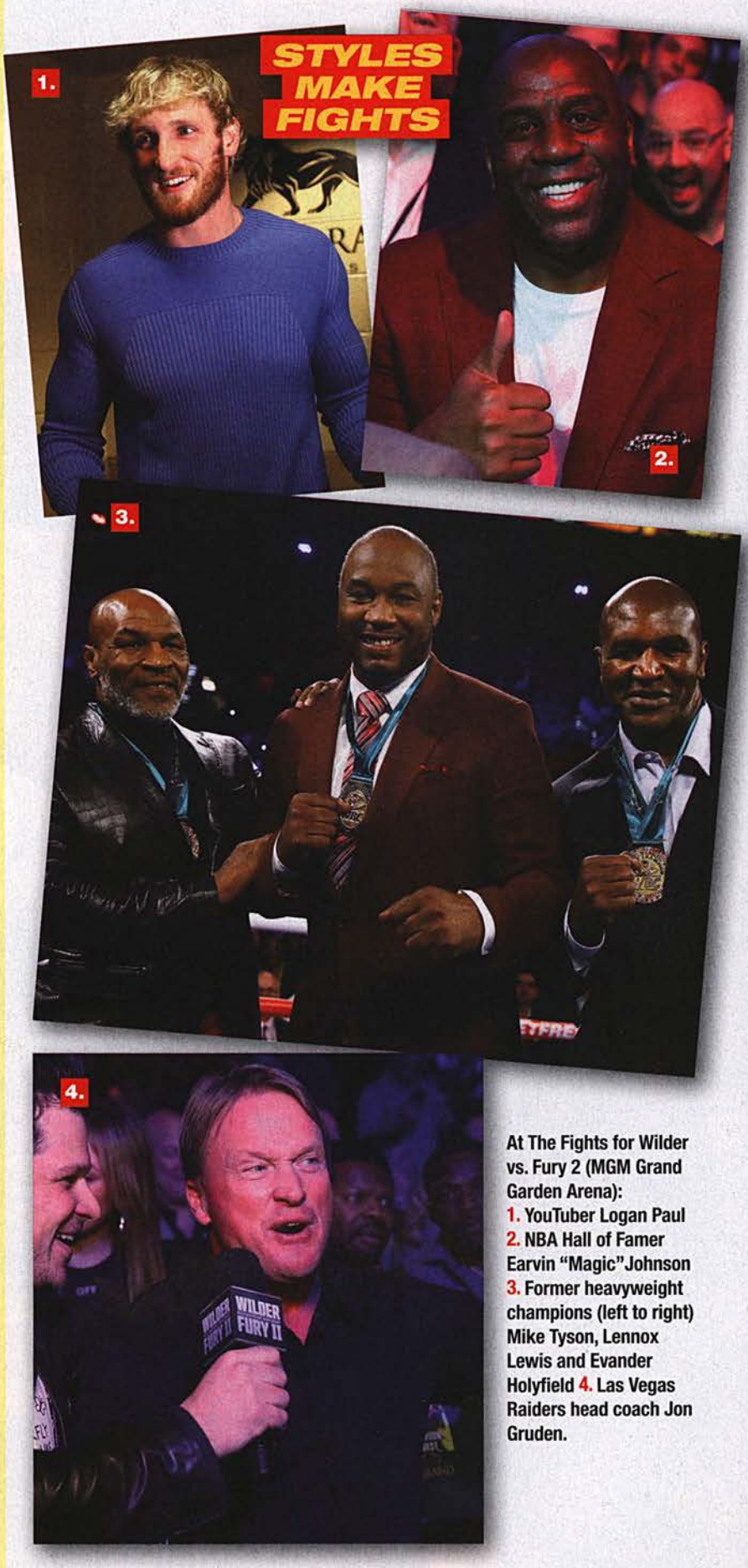
Light heavyweight prospect Artur "The Crimean Lion" Ziyatdinov (12-0, 9 KOs) continued to impress with his fifth-round stoppage of durable Argentine Cesar Hernan Reynoso (16-14-4, 8 KOs). Ziyatdinov was methodical as he worked behind a stiff jab and right hand. He demonstrated excellent fundamentals and discipline to stick to his game plan. He never got frustrated with Reynoso's toughness and ability to take a shot and keep firing back. Although

I would have liked to have seen more of a killer instinct from him, this was a valuable step forward in Ziyatdinov's progression as a contender and future title challenger.

★★★

Other successful Canadians in action this past month:

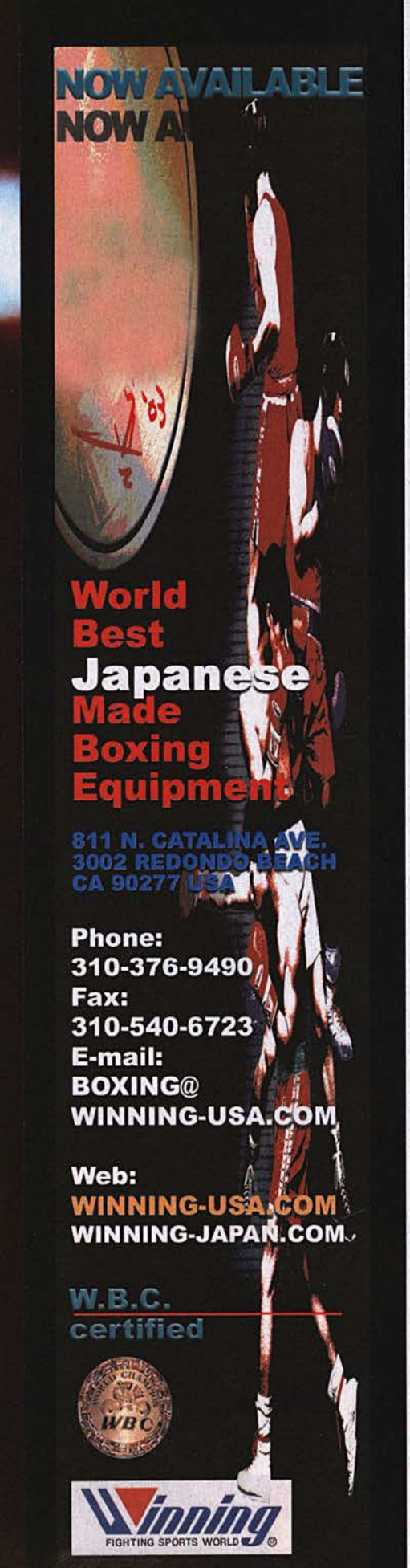
- On January 28, in Toronto, Ontario, streamed on UFC Fight Pass, Steve Rolls (20-1, 11 KOs) made his return to the ring after taking a beating from Gennadiy Golovkin last June. Rolls stopped 42-year-old Brazilian Gilberto Pereira dos Santos (16-11, 12 KOs) in four rounds to rebound from his first defeat as a pro. In the main event, welterweight Custio Clayton (18-0, 12 KOs) ended Diego Ramirez's night in eight rounds to remain undefeated. Clayton has serious talent, but he needs to face significantly stiffer competition if he hopes to earn a world title shot.
- On January 30 in Miami, on the Tevin Farmer-Joseph Diaz undercard, junior welterweight Arthur Biyarslanov (6-0, 5 KOs) stopped Nicolas Atilio Velazquez (11-8, 3 KOs). Biyarslanov, who represented Canada at the 2016 Olympics in Rio, is making substantial strides as a pro, and getting well-deserved exposure on DAZN cards will only help him going forward.
- Cruiserweight prospect Ryan Rozicki (12-0, 12 KOs) picked up another win in his hometown of Sydney, Nova Scotia, finishing Vladimir Reznicek (9-3-2, 4 KOs) in three rounds. In doing so, "The Bruiser" extends his perfect knockout streak. No one has been able to handle his heavy-handed pressure so far, and it will be interesting to see if that continues as he climbs the ranks and his competition gets tougher.



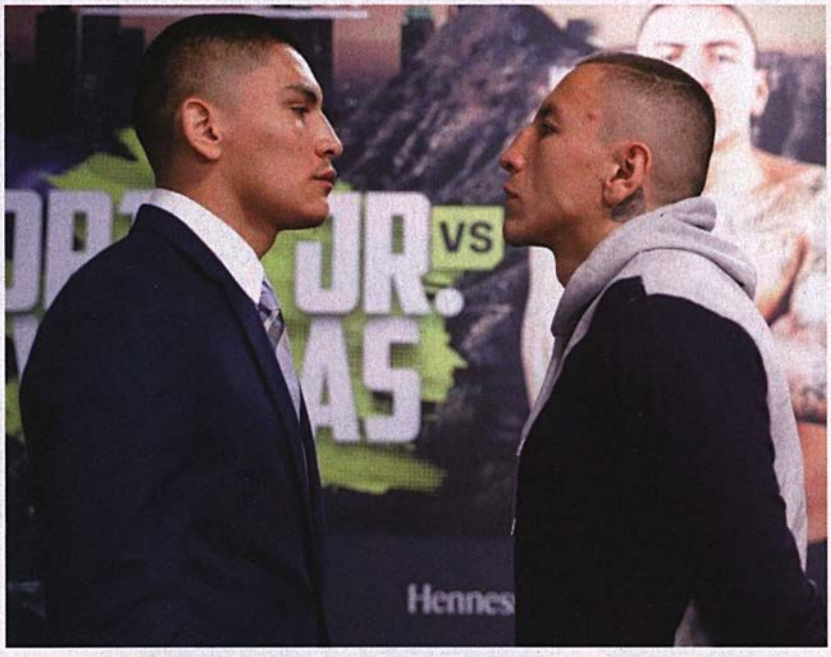
At The Fights for Wilder vs. Fury 2 (MGM Grand Garden Arena): 1. YouTuber Logan Paul 2. NBA Hall of Famer Earvin "Magic" Johnson 3. Former heavyweight champions (left to right) Mike Tyson, Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield 4. Las Vegas Raiders head coach Jon Gruden.

COMEBACK KING

While Tyson Fury completed a sensational comeback by dethroning long-reigning WBC heavyweight titleholder Deontay Wilder, his achievement falls short of what George Foreman (left) accomplished on November 5, 1994. Twenty years after being dethroned by Muhammad Ali in "The Rumble in the Jungle," the 45-year-old Foreman readied himself for a near-impossible chance of reclaiming the heavyweight championship of the world. Michael Moorer (right) was young, unbeaten, talented and coming off a 12-round decision over the great Evander Holyfield. At the very same venue where Wilder-Fury 2 took place, the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Foreman lost almost every minute of the bout until Round 10, when he connected with a pulverizing right to the jaw that knocked Moorer out cold. It happened!



COMING UP



The Ring's 2019 Prospect of the Year, Vergil Ortiz Jr. (left), will headline his first major show in Southern California when he takes on veteran Samuel Vargas at The Forum in Inglewood on March 28.

MARCH

MARCH 21 – Mairis Briedis vs. Yuniel Dorticos, cruiserweights (for vacant Ring, Briedis' WBO and Dorticos' IBF titles; WBSS final), Riga, Latvia (DAZN).
MARCH 28 – Vergil Ortiz vs. Samuel Vargas, welterweights, Inglewood, California (DAZN).
MARCH 28 – Artur Beterbiev vs. Fanlong Meng, light heavyweights (for Beterbiev's IBF/WBA titles), Quebec City, Canada (ESPN).
MARCH 28 – Luis Nery vs. Aaron Alameda, junior featherweights, Las Vegas (Showtime).
MARCH 28 – David Avanesyan vs. Josh Kelly, welterweights, London (DAZN).
MARCH 28 – Dominic Boesel vs. Zac Dunn, light heavyweights, Magdeburg, Germany (ESPN+).

APRIL

APRIL 4 – Giemel Magramo vs. Junto Nakatani, flyweights (for vacant WBO title), Tokyo.
APRIL 4 – Lewis Ritson vs. Miguel Vazquez, junior welterweights, Newcastle, U.K. (DAZN, Sky).
APRIL 11 – Daniel Dubois vs. Joe Joyce, heavyweights, London (ESPN+).
APRIL 11 – Jamal James vs. Thomas Dulorme, welterweights, Minneapolis (Fox).
APRIL 17 – Regis Prograis vs. Maurice Hooker, welterweights, Oxon Hill, Maryland (DAZN). Also, Cecilia Braekhus vs. Jessica McCaskill, welterweights (for Braekhus' IBF/WBA/WBC/WBO titles); Luke Campbell vs. Javier Fortuna, lightweights (for vacant WBC title).
APRIL 22 – Tim Tszyu vs. Jeff Horn, junior middleweights, Australia.
APRIL 25 – Naoya Inoue vs. John Riel Casimero, bantamweights (for Inoue's Ring/IBF/WBA and Casimero's WBO titles), Las Vegas (ESPN+).

MAY

MAY 2 – Josh Taylor vs. Apinun Khongsong, junior welterweights (for Taylor's Ring/IBF/WBA titles), Glasgow, Scotland (ESPN+).
MAY 9 – Jose Ramirez vs. Viktor Postol, junior welterweights (for Ramirez's WBC/WBO titles), Fresno, California (ESPN).

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